

APRIL 1909 HAROLD MACGRATH'S SERIAL STORY THIS ISSUE IS
COLORED FRONTISPIECE HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY CENTS

AINSLIE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS



**AUTHORS
THIS ISSUE**

MARY H. VORSE
CHARLES N. BUCK
ELIZABETH DUEB
STEEL WILLIAMS
JANE W. GUTHRIE
WILLIAM ARMSTRONG
MARIE VAN VORST
ARTHUR LORING BRUCE

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by
**ALONZO
KIMBALL**



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Victor-Victrola

Caruso and the Victor-Victrola

The celebrated tenor listening to a *Victor Record* of his own voice, on the *Victor-Victrola*—a new style *Victor*.

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Victor Talking Machine Co., Camden, N. J., U. S. A.

Berliner Gramophone Co., Montreal, Canadian Distributors.



A complete list of new *Victor Records* for April will be found in the April number of *Munsey's*, *Scribner's*, *McClure's*, *Century*, *Everybody's* and *May Cosmopolitan*.

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

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Ainslee's Magazine for May

A COMPLETE NOVEL BY

LEONARD MERRICK

Entitled "*A Family Tangle*." Mr. Merrick is the author of "*Lynch's Daughter*," one of the season's best sellers. His new novel, which will be a feature of the May AINSLEE'S, is an intensely interesting story of complications, which the heroine finds, for a time, deeply distressing.

There will also be a short story by **Joseph C. Lincoln**, called "*The Cure*" which will delight his thousands of friends. Other short stories will be contributed by **Quentin M. Drake**, **Owen Oliver**, **Henry G. Paine**, **Caroline Duer** and **Jane W. Guthrie**.



Reproduction of a painting to be used in
AINSLEE'S for May.

William Armstrong will have another of his fascinating articles, "*In Musicland*."

Steel Williams appears again with one of his unique stories of the West—"*A Hand at Politics*." **Arthur Loring Bruce** continues his articles on *Bridge Whist*.

HAROLD MacGRATH'S

serial, "*The Goose Girl*," will reach its third instalment, and its interest continues to grow.

MARIE VAN VORST'S

story is one of the most successful stories ever published in a magazine. "*In Ambush*" has made a great big hit.

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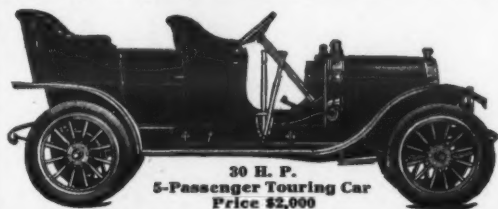
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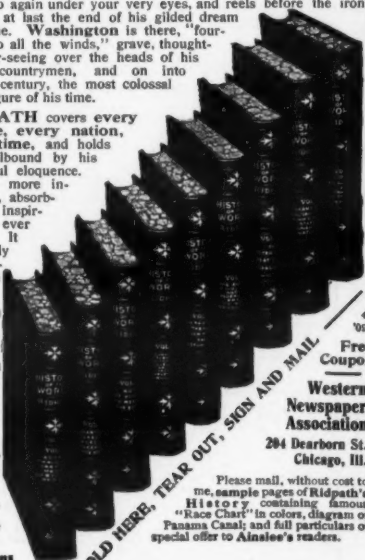
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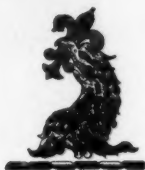
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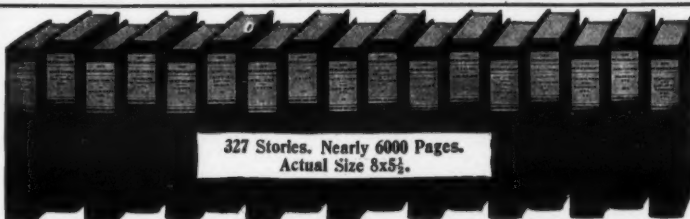
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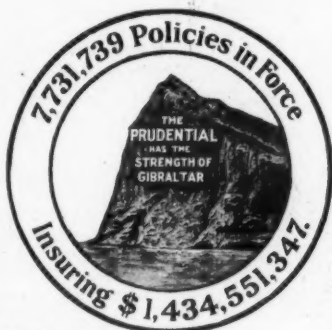
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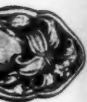
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"GRETCHEN RAN FORWARD AND TURNED
OVER THE LOG."

THE GOOSE GIRL



SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

The American consul at Dreiburg, capital of Ehrenstein, is Arthur Carmichael. Popular with the grand duke, he is hopelessly in love with the latter's daughter, Princess Hildegarde. She had been kidnaped sixteen years before, but found by the chancellor, Count von Herbeck. The kidnapers are unknown, but the grand duke suspects the late King of Jugendheit. Carmichael befriends a beautiful goose girl, Gretchen, who has been educated by a priest and is in love with a vintner, named Leo. The present King of Jugendheit has proposed for the hand of the princess and the chancellor urges acceptance.

CHAPTER V.



KRUMERWEG was indeed a crooked way. It formed a dozen elbows and ragged half-circles as it slunk off from the Adlergasse. Streets have character even as humans, and the Krumerweg reminded one of a person who was afraid of being followed. The shadow of the towering bergs lay upon it, and the few stars that peered down through the narrow crevice of rambling gables were small, as if the brilliant planets had neither time nor inclination to watch over such a place. And yet there lived in the Krumerweg many a kind and loyal heart, stricken with poverty. In old times the street had had an evil name, now it possessed only a pitiful one.

It was half after nine when Gretchen and the vintner picked their way over cobbles pitted here and there with mud-holes. They were arm in arm, and they laughed when they stumbled, laughed lightly, as youth always laughs when in love.

"Only a little farther," said Gretchen, for the vintner had never before passed over this way.

"Long as it is and crooked, heaven knows it is short enough!" He encircled her with his arms and kissed her. "I love you! I love you!" he said.

Gretchen was penetrated with rapture, for her ears, sharp with love and the eternal doubting of man, knew that falsehood could not lurk in such music. This handsome boy loved her. Buffeted as she had been, she could separate the false from the true. Come never so deep a sorrow, there would always be this—he loved her. Her bosom swelled, her heart throbbed, and she breathed in ecstasy the sweet chill air that rushed through the broken street.

"After the vintage," she said, giving his arm a pressure. For this handsome fellow was to be her husband when the vines were pruned and freshened against the coming winter.

"Aye, after the vintage," he echoed; but there was tragedy in his heart as deep and profound as his love.

"My grandmother—I call her that for I haven't any grandmother—is old and seldom leaves the house. I promised

that after work to-night I'd bring my man home and let her see how handsome he is. She is always saying that we need a man about; and yet, I can do a man's work as well as the next one. I love you, too, Leo!" She pulled his hand to her lips and quickly kissed it, frightened but unashamed.

"Gretchen, Gretchen!"

She stopped. "What is it?" keenly. "There was pain in your voice."

"The thought of how I love you hurts me. There is nothing else, nothing, neither riches nor crowns, nothing but you, Gretchen. How long ago was it I met you first?"

"Two weeks."

"Two weeks? Is it not years? Have I not always known and loved you?"

"And I! What an empty heart and head were mine till that wonderful day! You were tired and dusty and footsore; you had walked some twenty odd miles; yet you helped me with the geese. There were almost tears in your eyes, but I knew that your heart was a man's when you smiled at me." She stopped again and turned him round to her. "And you love me like this?"

"Whatever betide, *Liebesherz*, whatever befall." And he embraced her with a fierce tenderness, and so strong was he in the moment that Gretchen gave a cry. He kissed her, not on the lips, but on the fine white forehead, reverently.

They proceeded, Gretchen subdued and the vintner silent. They came to the end of their journey at number forty in the *Krumerweg*. It was a house of hanging gables, almost as old as the town itself, solid and grim and taciturn. There are some houses which talk like gossips, noisy, obtrusive, and provocative. Number forty was like an old warrior, gone to his chair by the fireside, who listens to the small-talk of his neighbors saturninely. What was it all about? Had he not seen battles and storms, revolutions and bloodshed? Prattle of children was preferable.

Gretchen's grandmother, *Fräulein Schwarz*, owned the house; it was all that barricaded her from poverty's

wolves, and, what with sundry taxes and repairs and tenants who paid infrequently, it was little enough. Whatever luxuries entered at number forty were procured by Gretchen herself. At present the two stories were occupied; the second by a malter and his brood of children, the third by a woman who was partially bedridden. The lower or ground floor of four rooms she reserved for herself. As a matter of fact the forward room, with its huge middle-age fireplace and the great square of beamed and plastered walls and stone flooring was sizable for all domestic purposes. Gretchen's pallet stood in a small alcove and the old woman's bed by the left of the fire.

Gretchen opened the door, which was unlocked. There was no light in the hall. She pressed her lover in her arms, kissed him lightly, and pushed him into the living-room. A log smoldered dimly on the irons. Gretchen ran forward, turned over the log, lighted two candles, then kissed the old woman seated in the one comfortable chair. The others were simply three-legged stools. There was little else in the room, save a poor reproduction of the *Virgin Mary*.

"Here I am, grandmother!"

"And who is here with you?" sharply but not unkindly.

"My man!" cried Gretchen gaily, her eyes bright as the candle flames.

"Bring him near me."

Gretchen gathered up two stools and placed them on either side of her grandmother and motioned to the vintner to sit down. He did so, easily and without visible embarrassment, even though the black eyes plunged a glance into his.

Her hair was white and thin, her nose aquiline, her lips fallen in, a cobweb of wrinkles round her eyes, down her cheeks, under her chin. But her sight was undimmed.

"Where are you from? You are not a *Dreiberger*."

"From the south, grandmother," forcing a smile to his lips.

The reply rather gratified her.

"Your name."

"Leopold Dietrich, a vintner by trade."

"You speak like a Hanoverian or a Prussian."

"I have passed some time in both countries. I have wandered about a good deal."

"Give me your hand."

The vintner looked surprised for a moment. Gretchen approved. So he gave the old woman his left hand. The grandmother smoothed it out upon her own and bent her shrewd eyes. Silence. Gretchen could hear the malter stirring above; the log cracked and burst into flame. A frown began to gather on the vintner's brow and a sweat in his palm.

"I see many strange things here," said the palmist, in a brooding tone.

"And what do you see?" asked Gretchen eagerly.

"I see very little of vineyards. I see riches, pomp; I see vast armies moving against each other; there is the smell of powder and fire; devastation. I do not see you, young man, among those who tramp with guns on their shoulders. You ride; there is gold on your arms. You will become great; but I do not understand. I do not understand," closing her eyes for a moment.

The vintner sat upright, his chin truculent, his arm tense.

"War!" he murmured.

Gretchen's heart sank; there was joy in his voice.

"Go on, grandmother," she whispered.

"Shall I live?" asked the vintner, whose belief in prescience till this hour had been of a negative quality.

"There is nothing here save death in old age, vintner." Her knurled hand seized his in a vise. "Do you mean well by my girl?"

"Grandmother!" Gretchen remonstrated.

"Silence!"

The vintner withdrew his hand slowly.

"Is this the hand of a liar and a cheat? Is it the hand of a dishonest man?"

"There is no dishonesty there; but

there are lines I do not understand. Oh, I cannot see everything; it is like seeing people in a mist. They pass instantly and disappear. But I repeat, do you mean well by my girl?"

"Before God and His angels I love her; before all mankind I would gladly declare it. Gretchen shall never come to harm at these hands. I swear it."

"I believe you." The old woman's form relaxed its tenseness.

"Thanks, grandmother," said Gretchen. "Now, read what my hand says."

The old woman took the hand. She loved Gretchen.

"I read that you are gentle and brave and cheerful, that you have a loyal heart and a pure mind. I read that you are in love and that some day you will be happy." A smile went over her face, a kind of winter sunset.

"You are not looking at my hand at all, grandmother," said Gretchen in reproach.

"I do not need, my child. Your life is written in your face." The grandmother spoke again to the vintner. "So you will take her away from me?"

"Will it be necessary?" he returned quietly. "Have you any objection to my becoming your foster grandchild, such as Gretchen is?"

The old woman made no answer. She closed her eyes and did not open them. Gretchen motioned that this was a sign that the interview was ended. But as he rose to his feet there was a sound outside. A carriage had stopped. Some one opened the door and began to climb the stairs. The noise ceased only when the visitor reached the top landing. Then all became still again.

"There is something strange going on up there," said Gretchen in a whisper.

"In what way?" asked the vintner in like undertones.

"Three times a veiled lady has called at night, three times a man muffled up so one could not see his face."

"Let us not question our twenty-crowns rent, Gretchen," interrupted the grandmother, waking. "So long as no

one is disturbed, so long as the police are not brought to our door, it is not our affair. Leopold, Gretchen, give me your hands." She placed them one upon the other, then spread out her hands above their heads. "The Holy Mother bring happiness and good luck to you, Gretchen."

"And to me?" said the youth.

"I could not wish you better luck than to give you Gretchen. Now, leave me."

The vintner picked up his hat and Gretchen led him to the street.

He hurried away, giving no glance at the closed carriage, the sleepy driver, the weary horse. Neither did he heed the man dressed as a carter who, when he saw the vintner, turned and followed. Finally, when the vintner veered into the Adlergasse, he stopped, his hands clenched, his teeth hard upon each other. He even leaned against the wall of a house, his face for the moment hidden in his arm.

"Wretch that I am! Damnable wretch! Krumerweg, Krumerweg! Crooked way indeed!" He flung down his arm passionately. "There will be a God up yonder," looking at the stars. "He will see into my heart and know that it is not bad, only young. Oh, Gretchen!"

"Gretchen?" The carter stepped into a shadow and waited.

Carmichael did not enjoy the opera that night. He had missed the first acts, and the last was gruesome, and the royal box was vacant. Outside he sat down on one of the benches near the fountains in the platz. His prolific imagination took the boundaries. Ah! That morning's ride, down the southern path of the mountains, the black squirrels in the branches, the red fox in the bushes, the clear spring, and the drink out of the tin cup which hung there for the thirsty! How prettily she had wrapped a leaf over the rusted edge of the cup! The leaf lay in his pocket. Already he had kissed a dozen times the spot where her lips had pressed it. Blind fool! Deeper and deeper; he knew that he never could go back to

that safe ledge of the heart-free. Time could not change his heart, not if given the thousand years of the wandering Jew.

He left the bench and strolled round the fountain, his cane behind his back, his chin in his collar. He had made the circle several times, then he blundered into some one. The fighting mood was gone now, the walk having calmed him. He murmured a short apology for his clumsiness and started on, without even looking at the animated obstacle.

"Just a moment, my studious friend."

"Wallenstein? I didn't see you."

Carmichael halted.

"That was evident," replied the colonel jestingly. "Heavens! Have you really cares of state, that you walk five times round this fountain, bump into me, and start to go on without so much as a How-do-you-do?"

"I'm absent-minded," Carmichael admitted.

"Not always, my friend."

"No, not always. You have some other meaning?"

"That is possible. Now, I do not believe that it was absent-mindedness which made you step in between me and that pretty goose-girl, the other night."

"Ah!" Carmichael was all alertness.

"It was not, I believe?"

"It was coldly premeditated," said Carmichael, folding his arms over his cane which he still held behind his back. His attitude and voice were pleasant.

"It was not friendly."

"Not to you, perhaps. But that happens to be an innocent girl, colonel. You're no Herod. There was nothing selfish in my act. You really annoyed her."

"Pretense; they always begin that way."

"I confess I know little about that kind of hunting, but I'm sure you've started the wrong quarry this time."

"I do not wish any quarrel, my captain; but that girl's face has fascinated me. I propose to see her as often as I like."

"I have no objection to offer; but I

told Gretchen that if any one, no matter who, ever offers her disrespect, to report the matter to me at the consulate."

"That is meddling."

"Call it what you like, my colonel."

"Well, in case she is what you consider insulted, what will you do?" a challenge in his tones.

"Report the matter to the police."

Wallenstein laughed.

"And if the girl finds no redress there," tranquilly, "to the chancellor."

"You would go that far?"

"Even farther," unruffled.

"It looks as though you had drawn your saber," with irony.

"Oh, I can draw it, colonel, and when I do I guarantee you'll find no rust on it. Come," and Carmichael held out his hand amicably, "Gretchen is already in love with one of her kind. Let the child be in peace. What! Is not the new ballerina enough conquest? They are all talking about it."

"Good night, Herr Carmichael!" The colonel, ignoring the friendly hand, saluted stiffly, wheeled abruptly, and left Carmichael staring rather stupidly at his empty hand.

"Well, I'm hanged! All right," with a tilt of the shoulders. "One enemy more or less doesn't matter."

He saw a carriage coming along. He recognized the white horse as it passed the lamps. He stood still for a space, undecided. Then he sped rapidly toward the side gates of the royal gardens. The vehicle stopped there. But this time no woman came out. Carmichael would have recognized that lank form anywhere. It was the chancellor. Well, what of it? Couldn't the chancellor go out in a common hack if he wanted to? But who was the lady in the veil?

As soon as the chancellor disappeared, Carmichael hailed the coachman.

"Drive me through the gardens."

"It is too late, herr."

"Well, drive me up and down the strasse while I finish this cigar."

"Two crowns."

"Three, if your horse behaves well."

"He's as gentle as a lamb, herr."

Carmichael lolled in the worn cushions, wondering whether or not to question his man. But it was so unusual for a person of such particular habits as the chancellor to ride in an ordinary carriage. Carmichael slid over to the forward seat and touched the jehu on the back.

"Where did you take the chancellor to-night?"

"*Du lieber Gott!* Was that his excellency? He said he was the chief steward."

"So he is, my friend. I was only jesting. Where did you take him?"

"I took him to the Krumerweg. He was there half an hour. Number forty."

"Where did you take the veiled lady?"

The coachman drew in suddenly and apprehensively. "Herr, are you from the police?"

"Thousand thunders, no! It was by accident that I stood near the gate when she got out. Who was she?"

"That is better. They both told me that they were giving charity. I did not see the lady's face, but she went into number forty, the same as the steward. You won't forget the extra crown, herr?"

"No; I'll make it five. Turn back and leave me at the Grand Hotel." Then he muttered: "Krumerweg, crooked way, number forty. If I see this old side-paddler stopping at the palace steps again, I'll take a look at number forty myself."

On the return to the hotel the station omnibus had arrived with a solitary guest. A steamer-trunk and a couple of bags were being trundled in by the porter, while the concierge was helping a short, stocky man to the ground. He hurried into the hotel, signed the police-slips, and asked for his room. He seemed to be afraid of the dark. He was gone when Carmichael went into the office.

"Your excellency," said the concierge, rubbing his hands and smiling after the manner of concierges born in Switzer-

land, "a compatriot of yours arrived this evening."

"What name?" indifferently. Compatriots were always asking impossible things of Carmichael, introductions to the grand duke, invitations to balls, and so forth, and swearing to have him recalled if he refused to perform these offices.

The concierge picked up the slips which were to be forwarded to the police.

"He is Hans Grumbach, of New York."

"An adopted compatriot, it would seem. He'll probably be over to the consulate to-morrow to have his passports looked into. Good night."

So Hans Grumbach passed out of his mind; but for all that, fortune and opportunity were about to knock on Carmichael's door. For there was a great place in history ready for Hans Grumbach.

CHAPTER VI.

The day promised to be mild. There was not a cloud anywhere, and the morning mists had risen from the valleys. It was good to stand in the sunshine which seemed to draw forth all the vagaries and weariness of sleep from the mind and body. Hans Grumbach shook himself gratefully. He was standing on the curb in front of the Grand Hotel, his back to the sun. It was nine o'clock. The broad Königsstrasse shone, the white stone of the palaces glared, the fountains glistened, and the coloring tree-tops scintillated like the head-dress of an Indian prince. Hans was short but strongly built; a mild blue-eyed German, smooth-faced, ruddy-cheeked, white-haired, with a brown button of a nose. He drank his beer with the best of them, but it never got as far as his nose save from the outside. His suit was tight-fitting, but the checks were ample, and the watch-chain a little too heavy, and the huge garnet on his third finger was not in good taste. But what's the odds? Grumbach was satisfied, and it's one's own satisfaction that counts most.

Presently two police officers came along and went into the hotel. Grumbach turned with a sigh and followed them. Doubtless they had come to look over his passports. And this happened to be the case.

The senior officer unfolded the precious document.

"It is not yet viséed by your consul," said the officer.

"I arrived late last night. I shall see him this morning," replied Grumbach.

"You were not born in America."

"Oh, no; I came from Bavaria."

"At what age?"

"I was twenty."

"You still have your permit to leave Bavaria?"

"I believe so; I am not certain. I never thought in those days I should become rich enough to travel."

The word that tingled with gold soothed the suspicious ear of the officer.

"What is your business in America?"

"I am a plumber, now retired."

"And your business here?"

"Simply pleasure."

"You are forty?" referring to the passports.

"Yes."

"This is rather young to retire from business."

"Not in America," easily.

"True, everybody grows rich there, with gold-mines popping open at one's feet. It must be a great country." The officer sighed as he refolded the documents. "As soon as these are approved by his excellency the American consul, kindly have a porter bring them over to the bureau of police. It will be only a matter of form. I shall return them at once."

Grumbach produced a Louis Napoleon which was then as now acceptable that side of the Rhine. It was not done with pomposity, but rather with the exuberance of a man whose purse and letter of credit possess an assuring circumference.

"Drink a bottle, you and your comrade," he said.

This the officer promised to do forthwith. He returned the passports, put

a hand to his cap respectfully and, followed by his assistant, walked off briskly.

Grumbach took off his derby and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. This moisture had not been wrung forth by any atmospheric effect. From the top of his forehead to the cow-lick on the back of his head ran a broad white scar. At one time or another Grumbach had been on the ragged edge of the long journey. He went out of doors. There is nothing like sunshine to tonic the ebbing courage.

Coming up the thoroughfare, with a dash of spirit and color, was a small troop of horses. The sunlight broke upon the steel and silver. A waiter, cleaning off the little iron tables on the sidewalk, paused. The riders passed, all but two in splendid uniforms. Grumbach watched them till they disappeared into the palace courtyard. He called to the waiter.

"Who are they?"

"The grand duke and some of his staff, herr."

"The grand duke? Who was the gentleman in civilian clothes?"

"That was his excellency Herr Carmichael, the American consul."

"Very good. And the young lady?"

"Her serene highness, the Princess Hildegarde."

"Bring me a glass of beer," said Grumbach, sinking down at a table. A thousand questions surged against his lips, but he kept them shut with all the phlegm of his native blood. When the waiter set the beer down before him, he said: "Where does Herr Carmichael live?"

"The consulate is in the Adlergasse. He himself lives here at the Grand Hotel. *Ach!* He is a great man, Herr Carmichael."

"So?"

"A friend of the grand duke, a friend of her serene highness, liked everywhere, a fine shot and a great fencer, and rides a horse as if he were sewn to the saddle. And all the ladies admire him because he dances."

So Herr Carmichael lived here. That would be convenient. Grumbach de-

cided to wait for him. He had seen enough of men to know if he could trust the consul.

The wait for Carmichael was short. The American consul came along with energetic stride. He had been to the earlier maneuvers, and aside from coffee and bacon he had had no breakfast. The ride and the cold air of morning had made him ravenous. Grumbach rose and caught Carmichael by the arm.

"Your pardon, sir," he said in good English, "but you are Mr. Carmichael, the American consul?"

"I am."

"Will you kindly look over my papers?"

"You are from the United States?" Then Carmichael remembered that this must be the compatriot who arrived the night before. "I shall be very glad to see you in the Adlergasse at half after ten. It is one flight up, next door to the Black Eagle. Any one will show you the way. I haven't breakfasted yet, and I cannot transact any business in these dusty clothes. Good morning."

Grumbach liked the consul's smile. More than that, he recognized instantly that this handsome young man was a gentleman. The inherent respect for caste had not been beaten out of Grumbach's blood; he had come from a brood in a peasant's hovel. To him the word gentleman would always signify birth and good clothes; what the heart and mind were did not matter much.

He had more than an hour to idle away, so he wandered through the park, admiring the freshness of the green, the well-kept flower-beds, the crisp hedges, and the clean graveled paths. There was nothing like it back there in America. They hadn't the time there; everybody was in the market, speculating in bubbles.

He looked up heavenward, where the three bergs shouldered the dazzling snow into the blue. This impressed him more than all else; that little wrinkle in the middle berg's ice had been there when he was a boy. Nothing had changed in Dreiberg save the Königs-

strasse, whose cobbles had been replaced by smooth blocks of wood. At times he sent swift but uncertain glances toward the palaces. He longed to peer through the great iron fence, but he smothered this desire. He would find out what he wanted to know when he met Carmichael at the consulate. Here the bell in the cathedral struck the tenth hour; not a semitone had this voice of bronze changed in all these years. It was good to be here in Dreiberg again. Should he ask the way to the Adlergasse? Perhaps this would be wiser. So he put the question to a policeman. The officer politely gave him a detailed route.

"Follow these directions and you will have no trouble in finding the Adlergasse."

"Much obliged."

Trouble? Scarcely! He had put out his first protest against the world in the Adlergasse, forty years since. He came to a stand before the old tavern. Not even the sign had been painted anew, though the oak board was a trifle paler and there was a little more rust on the hinges. Many a time he had fought with the various pot-boys. He wondered if there were any pot-boys inside now. He noted the dingy consulate sign, then started up the dark and narrow stairs. The consulate door stood open. A clerk, native to Ehrenstein, was writing at a table. At a desk by the window sat Carmichael, deep in a volume of Dumas. No one ever hurried here; no one ever had palpitation of the heart over the volume of business done. The clerk lifted his head.

"Mr. Carmichael?" said Grumbach in English.

The clerk indicated with his pen toward the individual by the window. Carmichael read on. Grumbach had assimilated some Americanisms. He went boldly over and seated himself in the chair at the side of the desk. With a sigh Carmichael left Porthos in the grotto of Locmaria.

"I am Mr. Grumbach. I spoke to you this morning about my passports. Will you kindly look them over?"

Carmichael took the papers, frown-

ing slightly. Grumbach laid his derby on his knees. The consul went over the papers, viséed them, and handed them to their owner.

"You will have no trouble going about with those," Carmichael said listlessly. "How long will you be in Dreiberg?"

"I do not know," said Grumbach truthfully.

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

"There is only one thing," answered Grumbach, "but you may object, and I shall not blame you if you do. It will be a great favor."

"What do you wish?" more listlessly.

"An invitation to the military ball at the palace, after the maneuvers," quietly.

Carmichael sat up. He had not expected so large an order as this.

"I am afraid you are asking something impossible for me to obtain," he replied coldly, thumbing the leaves of his book.

"Ah, Mr. Carmichael, it is very important that I should be there."

"Explain."

"I can give you no explanations. I wish to attend this ball. I do not care to meet the grand duke or any one else. Put me in the gallery where I shall not be noticed. That is all I ask."

"That might be done. But you have roused my curiosity. Your request is out of the ordinary. You have some purpose?"

"A perfectly harmless one," said Grumbach, mopping his forehead.

This movement brought Carmichael's eye to the scar. Grumbach acknowledged the stare by running his finger along the object of it.

"I came near passing in my checks the day I got that," he volunteered. "Everybody looks at it when I take off my hat. I've tried tonics, but the hair won't grow there."

"Where did you get it?"

"At Gettysburg."

"Gettysburg?" with a lively facial change. "You were in the war?"

"All through it."

Carmichael was no longer indifferent. He gave his hand.

"I've got a few scars myself. What regiment?"

"The —th cavalry, New York."

"What troop?" with growing excitement.

"C troop."

"I was captain of B troop in the same regiment. Hurrah! Work's over for the day. Come along with me, Grumbach, and we'll talk it over down-stairs in the Black Eagle. You're a god-send. C troop! Hanged if the world doesn't move things about oddly. I was in the hospital myself after Gettysburg; a ball in the leg. And I've rheumatism even now when a damp spell comes. Didn't we beat 'em, though?"

"You bet!" Grumbach was as happy as a boy.

So down to the tavern they went, and there they talked the battles over, sundry tankards interpolating. It was "Do you remember this?" and "Do you recall that?" with diagrams drawn in beer on the oaken table.

"But there's one thing, my boy," said Carmichael.

"What's that?"

"The odds were on our side, or we'd be fighting yet."

"That we would. The poor devils were always hungry when we whipped them badly."

"But you're from this side of the water?"

"Yes; went over when I was twenty." Grumbach sucked his pipe stolidly.

"What part of Germany?"

"Bavaria; it is so written in my passports."

"Munich?"

Grumbach circled the room. All the near tables were vacant. The Black Eagle was generally a lonely place till late in the afternoon. Grumbach touched the scar tenderly. Could he trust this man? Could he trust any one in the world? The impulse came to trust Carmichael, and he did not disregard it.

"I was born in this very street," he whispered.

"Here?"

"Sh! Not so loud! Yes, in this very street. But if the police knew, I wouldn't be worth *that!*" with a snap of the fingers. "My passports, my American citizenship, they would be worthless. You know that."

"But what does this all mean? What have you done that you can't come back here openly?" Here was a mystery. This man with the kindly face and frank eyes could be no ordinary criminal. "Can I help you in any way?"

"No; no one can help me."

"But why did you come back? You were safe enough in New York."

"Who can say what a man will do? Don't question me. Let be. I have said too much already. Some day perhaps I will tell you why. When I went away I was thin and pale and had yellow hair. To-day I am fat, gray-headed; I have made money. Who will recognize me now? No one."

"But your name?"

Grumbach laughed unmusically. "Grumbach is as good as another. Listen. You are my comrade now; we have shed our blood on the same field. There is no tie stronger than that. When I left Dreiberg there was a reward of five thousand crowns for me. Dead or alive, preferably dead."

Carmichael was plainly bewildered. He tried to recall the past history of Ehrenstein which would offer a niche for this inoffensive-looking German. He was blocked.

"Dead or alive," he repeated.

"So."

"You were mad to return."

"I know it. But I had to come; I couldn't help it. Oh, don't look like that! I never hurt anybody, unless it was in battle," naively. "Ask no more, my friend. I promise to tell you when the right time comes. Now, will you get me that invitation to the gallery at the military ball?"

"I will, if you will give me your word, as a soldier, as a comrade in arms, that you have no other purpose than to look at the people."

"As God is my judge," solemnly, "that is all I wish to do. Now, what

has happened since I went away? I have dared to ask questions of no one."

Carmichael gave him a brief summary of events, principal among which was the amazing restoration of the Princess Hildegarde. When he had finished, Grumbach remained dumb and motionless for a time.

"And what is her serene highness like?"

To describe the Princess Hildegarde was not only an easy task, but a pleasant one to Carmichael, and if he embroidered this description here and there, Grumbach was too deeply concerned with the essential points to notice these variations in the theme.

"So she is gentle and beautiful? Why not? *Ach!* You should have seen her mother. She was the most beautiful woman in all Germany, and she sang like one of those Italian nightingales. I recall her when I was a boy. I would gladly have died at a word from her. All loved her. The King of Jugendheit wanted her, but she loved the grand duke. So the Princess Hildegade has come back to her own? God is good!" And Grumbach bent his head reverently.

"Well," said Carmichael, beckoning to the waitress and paying the score, "if any trouble arises, send for me. You don't look like a man who has done anything very bad." He offered his hand again.

Grumbach pressed it firmly.

Together they returned to the Grand Hotel for lunch. On the way neither talked very much. They were both thinking of the same thing, but from avenues diametrically opposed. Grumbach declined Carmichael's invitation to lunch, and immediately sought his own room.

Once there, he closed the shutters so as to admit but half the day's light, and opened his battered trunk. From the false bottom, which had successfully eluded the vigilance of a dozen frontiers, he took out a small bundle. This he opened carefully, his eyes blurring. Mad fool that he had been! How many times had he gazed at these trinkets in these sixteen or more years?

How often had he uttered lamentations over them? How many times had the talons of remorse gashed his heart?

Two little yellow shoes, so small that they lay on his palm as lightly as two butterflies; a little cloak trimmed with ermine; a golden locket shaped like a heart!

CHAPTER VII.

Grumbach was very fond of music, and in America there were never any bands except at political meetings or at the head of processions; and that wasn't the sort of music he preferred. There was nothing at the Opera, so he decided to spend the earlier part of the evening in the public gardens. He was lonely; he had always been lonely. Men who carry depressing secrets generally are. He searched covertly among the many faces for one that was familiar, but he saw none; and he was at once glad and sorry. Yes, there was one face; the rubicund countenance of the bandmaster. It was older, more wrinkled, but it was the same. How many years had the old fellow swung the baton? At least thirty years. In his boyhood days Grumbach had put that brilliant uniform side by side with the grand duke's. As it was impossible for him ever to become a duke, his ambition had been to arrive at the next greatest thing—the bandmaster. As he neared the pavilion he laughed silently and grimly. To have grown wealthy as a master plumber instead! So much for ambition!

Subsequently he found himself standing beside a young vintner and his peasant sweetheart. Their hands secretly met and locked behind their backs. Grumbach sighed. Never would he know aught of this double love.

The girl turned her head. Seeing Grumbach, she loosened the vintner's hand.

"Do not mind me, girl," said Grumbach, his face broadening.

The girl laughed easily and without confusion. Her companion, however, flushed under his tan, and a scowl ran over his forehead.

The band struck up, and the little comedy was forgotten. But Grumbach could not see anything but the girl's face, the fresh, exquisite turn of the profile. Once his eye wandered rather guiltily. Her figure was in keeping with her face. Then he saw the little wooden shoes. Ah, well, so long as kings surrounded themselves with pomp and armies, there would always be wooden shoes. The band was playing "Les Huguenots"; and the girl hummed the airs.

"Do not go there to-night, Gretchen," said the vintner.

"It is a crown."

"I will give you two if you will not go," the vintner urged.

"Foolish boy, what good would that do? We need every crown we have or can get, if we are to be married soon. And you have not gone to work yet. And every day costs you a crown to live, and more, for all I know. You spend a crown as carelessly as if all you had to do was to pick them off the vines. Crowns are hard to get."

"When one is happy, one does not stop to bother about crowns," he said impatiently.

"But will such happiness last? Shall we not be happier as our crowns accumulate, to ward off sickness and hunger? Must I teach you economy?"

"I will apply for work to-morrow and waste no more crowns, my heart." The vintner's hand again sought hers and found it. And he sent Grumbach a look which said: "Smile if you dare!"

But Grumbach did not smile. He was too sad. He fell into a dream, and the music faded in his ear and the lights of the pavilion grew dim. He was a boy again, and he was carrying posies to the pretty little *fräulein* in the *Adlergasse*. Dreams never last, and sometimes they are rudely interrupted.

A hand was put upon his shoulder authoritatively. The police officer who had examined his passports that morning stood at Grumbach's elbow.

"Herr Grumbach," he said quietly, "his excellency the chancellor has directed me to bring you at once to the palace."

"To the palace?" Grumbach's face was expressive of great astonishment. The officer saw nothing out of the ordinary in this expression. Any foreigner would have been seized with confusion under like circumstances. "To the palace?" Grumbach repeated. "My passports were wrong in some respect?"

"Oh, no, herr; they were correct."

Grumbach roused his mind energetically. He forced down the fast beating of his heart, banished the astonishment from his face, and even brought a smile to his lips.

"But whatever can the chancellor want of me?"

"That is not my business. I was simply sent to find you. His excellency is always interested in German-Americans. It may be that he wishes to ask what the future is there in America. We have more in Dreiberg than we can reasonably take care of."

"In the prisons?"

The officer laughed. "There and elsewhere."

"Shall we go at once? I never expected to enter the palace of the Grand Duke of Ehrenstein," Grumbach added. "It will be something to tell of when I go back to America."

The only thing that reassured him was the presence of one officer. When they came for a man on a serious charge, in Ehrenstein, they came in pairs or fours. So then, there could be pending nothing vital to his liberty or his incognito. Besides, his papers were all right, and now there would be Carmichael to fall back on.

"The palace is lighted up," was Grumbach's comment as the two passed the sentry outside the gates.

"The duke gives the dinner to the diplomatic corps to-night."

"A fine thing to be a diplomat."

"I myself prefer fighting in the open. Diplomats? Their very precious hides are never anywhere near the wars they bring about. No, no; this way. We go in at the side."

"You'll have to guide me. Yes, these diplomats. Men like you and I do all

the work. I was in the Civil War in America."

"That was a great fight," remarked the officer. "I should like to have been there."

"Four years; pretty long. Do you know Herr Carmichael?"

"The American consul? Oh, yes."

"He and I fought in the same regiment."

"Then you saw some pretty battles."

Grumbach took off his hat. "See that?"

"Gott! That must have been an ugly one."

"Almost crossed over when I got it. Is this the door?"

"Yes. I'll put you in snugly. You will probably have to wait for his excellency. But you'll have me for company till he appears."

Grumbach entered the palace with a brave heart and a steady mind.

The grand duke had a warm place in his heart for the diplomatic corps. He liked to see them gathered round his table, their uniforms glittering with orders and decorations. It was always a night of wits; and he sprang a hundred traps for comedy's sake, but these astonishing linguists seldom if ever blundered into one of them. They were eternally vigilant. It was no trifling matter to swing the thought from German into French or Italian or Hungarian; but they were seasoned veterans in the game, all save Carmichael, who spoke only French and German fluently. The duke, however, never tried needlessly to embarrass him. He admired Carmichael's mental agility. Never he thrust so keenly that the American was found lacking in an effective though simple parry.

"Your highness must recollect that I am not familiar with that tongue."

"Pardon me, herr captain!"

But there was always a twinkle in the ducal eye and an answering smile in the consul's.

The somber black of Carmichael's evening dress stood out conspicuously among the blue and green and red uni-

forms. He wore no orders. An order of the third or fourth class held no allurements. Nothing less than the Golden Fleece would have interested him, and the grand duke himself could not boast of this rare and distinguished order. In truth, Carmichael coveted nothing but a medal for valor, and his own country had not yet come to recognize the usefulness of such a distinction.

All round him sat ministers or ambassadors; he alone represented a consulate. So his place at the table was honorary rather than diplomatic. It was his lively humorous personality the grand duke admired, not his representations.

The duke sat at the head of the table and her serene highness at the foot; and it was by the force of his brilliant wit that the princess did not hold in perpetuity the court at her end of the table. For a German princess in that time she was highly accomplished; she was ardent, whimsical, with a flashing mentality which rounded out and perfected her physical loveliness. Above and beyond all this, she had suffered, she had felt the pangs of poverty, the smart of unrecognized merit; she had been one of the people, and her sympathies would always be with them, for she knew what those about her only vaguely knew, the patience, the unassuming bravery of the poor. Never would she become sated with power so long as it gave her the right to aid the people. Never a new tax was levied that she did not lighten it in some manner; never an oppressive law was promulgated that she did not soften its severity. And so the populace loved her, for it did not take the people long to find out what she was trying to do for them. And perhaps they loved her because she had lived the greater part of her young life as one of them.

To-night there was love in the duke's eyes as he looked down the table's length; there was love in the old chancellor's eyes, too; and in Carmichael's. And there was love in her eyes as she gazed back at the two old men. But who could read her eyes whenever they roved in Carmichael's direction? Not

even Gretchen's grandmother, who lived in the Krumerweg.

"Gentlemen," said the duke, rising and holding up his glass, "this night I give you a toast which I believe will be agreeable to all of you, especially to his excellency, Baron von Steinbock of Jugendheit. What is past is past; a new régime begins this night." He paused. All eyes were focused upon him in wonder. Baron von Steinbock also remained without more than ordinary interest. "I give you," resumed the duke, "her serene highness and his majesty, Frederick of Jugendheit!"

The princess grew delicately pale as the men and women sprang to their feet. Every hand swept toward her, holding a glass. She had surrendered that morning. Not because she wished to be a queen, not because she cared to bring about an alliance between the two countries; no, it was because she was afraid and had burned the bridge behind her.

The tan thinned on Carmichael's face, but his hand was steady. Never would he forget the tableau. She sat still in her chair, her lids drooped, but a proud lift to her chin. The collar of pearls round her neck had scarce more luster than her shoulders. How red her lips seemed against the whiteness of her skin! Beautiful to him beyond all dreams of beauty. God send another war and let him die in the heart of it, fighting! To dream lies as he had done this twelvemonth, to break his heart over the moon! He set his glass down untouched, happily unobserved. He was in misery; he wanted to be alone.

"Long live her majesty!" thundered the chancellor. He, too, was pale, but the fire of great things burned in his eyes and his lank form took upon itself a transient majesty.

In the ballroom the princess was surrounded; everybody flattered her, congratulated her, and complimented her. All agreed that it was a great political stroke. And indeed it was, but none of them knew how great.

Carmichael was among the last to approach her. By this time he had his voice and nerves under control.

"I thought perhaps you had forgotten me," she said.

"Forget your highness? Do not give me credit for such an impossibility." He bowed over her hand and brushed it with his lips, for she was almost royal now. "Your highness will be happy. It is written." He stepped back.

"Have you the gift of prescience?" "In this instance. You will be a great queen."

"Who knows?" dreamily. "When I recall what I have gone through, all this seems like an enchantment out of a fairy-book, and that I must soon wake up in my garret in Dresden."

If only it might be an enchantment! he thought. If only he might find her as the grim old chancellor had found her, in a garret! What? Dreaming again? He shrugged.

"Why did you do that?" she asked quickly.

"I do not understand."

"You shrugged."

"I beg your highness' pardon!" flushing. "I was not conscious of such rudeness."

"That is not answering my question."

"I beg of your highness——"

"My highness commands!" But her voice was gentle.

"It was a momentary dream I had; and the thought of its utter impossibility caused me to shrug. I assure your highness that it was a philosophical shrug, such as the Stoics were wont to indulge in." He spoke lightly. Only his eyes were serious.

"And this dream; was there not a woman in it?"

"Oh, no; there was only an angel."

She knew that it was not proper to question him in this manner; but neither her heart nor her mind was formal to-night.

"You interest me; you always interest me. You have seen so many wonderful things. And now it is angels."

"Only one, your highness." This was daring. "But perhaps I am putting my foot where angels fear to tread," which was still more daring.

"Angels ought not to be afraid of

anything." She laughed; there were a pain and a joy in the sound of it. She read his heart as one might read a written line.

"Dreams are always unfinished things," he said, getting back on safer ground.

"What is she like, this angel?" forcing him upon dangerous ground again willfully.

"Who may describe an angel one has seen only in a golden dream?"

"You will not tell me?"

"I dare not!" His eyes sought hers unflinchingly. This moment he was mad, and had not the chancellor and Baron von Steinbock come up, heaven only knew what further madness would have unbridled his tongue.

"Your highness," began the benign voice of the chancellor, "the baron desires, in the name of his august master, to open the ball with you. Behold my fairy-wand," gaily. "This night I have made you a queen."

"Can you make me happy also?" said she, so low that only the chancellor heard her.

"I shall try. Ah, herr captain," with a friendly jerk of his head toward Carmichael; "will you do me the honor to join me in my cabinet, quarter of an hour hence?"

"I shall be there, your excellency." Carmichael was uneasy. He was not certain how much the chancellor had heard.

"A little diplomatic business in which I shall need your assistance," supplemented the chancellor.

Carmichael, instead of loitering uselessly in the ballroom, at once sought the chancellor's cabinet. He wanted to be alone. He made known his business to the chancellor's valet who admitted him. He stopped just across the threshold. To his surprise the room was already tenanted. Grumbach and a police officer!

"Why, Grumbach, what are you doing here?"

"Waiting for his excellency. We have been here something past an hour."

"What's the trouble?" Carmichael inquired.

"Your excellency knows as much as I do," said the officer, who was in fact no less than the sub-chief of the bureau.

"And I am in the dark also," said Grumbach, twirling his hat.

Carmichael walked about, studying the many curios. Occasionally Grumbach wiped his forehead and, absently, the inner rim of his hat. Perhaps the three of them waited twenty minutes; then the chancellor came in. He bowed cordially and drew chairs about his desk. He placed Grumbach in the full glare of the lamp. Carmichael and the sub-chief were in the half-light. The chancellor was last to seat himself.

"Herr Grumbach," said the chancellor in a mild tone, "I should like to see your papers."

"My passports, your excellency?"

"Yes."

Grumbach laid them on the desk imperturbably. The chancellor struck the bell. His valet answered immediately.

"Send Breunner, the head gardener, at once."

"He is in the anteroom, excellency."

"Tell him to come in."

The chancellor shot a piercing glance at Grumbach, but the latter was studying the mural decorations.

Carmichael sat tight in his chair, curious to learn what it was all about. Breunner entered. He was thin and partly bald and quite fifty.

"Breunner, her highness will need many flowers to-morrow. See to it that they are cut in the morning."

"It shall be done, excellency."

The chancellor turned to the passports.

"There is only one question, Herr Grumbach. It says here that you were a native of Bavaria before going to America. How long ago did you leave Bavaria?"

"A good many years, your excellency." Grumbach inspected the label in his hat.

"You have, of course, retained your Bavarian passport?"

Carmichael was now leaning forward in his chair, deeply interested. He saw that the chancellor was watching Grumbach as a cat watches a mouse-hole.

Grumbach brought forth a bulky wallet. The edges of Bank of England notes could be seen, of fat denominations.

"Here it is, your excellency; a little ragged, but readable still."

The chancellor went over it carefully.

"Herr captain, do you know this compatriot?"

"We fought side by side in the American war. I saw no irregularity in his papers. I am rather astonished to see him here and not at the police bureau, if any question has arisen over his passports."

"Fought side by side," the chancellor repeated thoughtfully. "Then he is no stranger to you?"

"I do not say that. We were, however, in the same cavalry, only in different troops. Grumbach, you have your honorable discharge with you?"

Grumbach went into his wallet still again. This document the chancellor read with an interest foreign to the affair under his hand. Presently he laughed softly. Why, he could not readily have told.

"I am sorry, Herr Grumbach. All this unnecessary trouble simply because of the word Bavaria."

"No trouble at all, your excellency," restoring his papers. "I have seen the inside of a real palace, and I never expected such an honor."

"How long will you be making your visit?"

"Only a few days, your excellency. Then I shall proceed to Bavaria."

"Your excellency has no further orders?" said the head gardener patiently.

"Good heaven, Breunner, I had forgotten all about you! There is nothing more. Gentlemen, your pardon for having detained you so long. Herr captain, you will return with me to the ballroom?"

"If your excellency will excuse me, no. I am tired. I will return to the hotel with Herr Grumbach."

"As you please. Good night."

The three left the cabinet under various emotions. The sub-chief bowed

himself off at the gates, and Carmichael and Grumbach crossed the platz leisurely.

"How did you come by that Bavarian passport?" asked Carmichael abruptly.

"It is a forgery, my friend, but his excellency will never find that out."

"You have me all at sea. Why did he bring in the head gardener and leave him standing there all that while?"

"He had a sound purpose, but it fell. The head gardener did not recognize me."

"Do you know him?"

"Yes. He is my elder brother."

CHAPTER VIII.

The ambassador from Jugendheit, Baron von Steinbock, was not popular in Dreiberg, at least not among the people, who still held to the grand duke's idea that the kingdom had been behind the abduction of the Princess Hildegarde. The citizens scowled at his carriage, they scowled at the mention of his name, they scowled whenever they passed the embassy, which stood in the heart of the fashionable residences in the König-strasse. Never a hot-headed Dreiberger passed the house without a desire to loot it, to scale the piked fence and batter in the doors and windows. Steinbock himself was a polished, amiable gentleman, in no wise meriting this ill-feeling. The embassy was in all manner the most important in Dreiberg, though Prussia and Austria overshadowed it in wealth and prestige.

At this moment the people gazed at the house less in rancor than in astonishment. The King of Jugendheit was to marry her serene highness! It was a bad business, a bad business; no good would come of it. The great duke was a weak man, after all.

The menials in and about the embassy felt the new importance of their positions. So then, imagine the indignation of the majordomo, when, summoned at dusk one evening to the carriage gates, three or four days after the portentous news had issued from the

palace, he found only a ragged and grimy carter who demanded peremptorily to be admitted and taken to his excellency at once.

"Be off with you, ragamuffin!" growled the majordomo.

"Be quick; open the gates!" replied the carter, swinging his whip threateningly.

"Go away!" The majordomo spun on his heels contemptuously.

"I will skin you alive," vowed the carter, striking the iron with the butt of his whip, "if you do not open these gates immediately. Open!"

There was real menace this time. Could the fellow be crazy? The majordomo concluded to temporize.

"My good man," he said conciliatorily, "you have brains. You ought to know that his excellency will receive no man in your condition. If you do not stop hammering on those bars, I shall send for the police."

The carter thrust a hand through the grill. There was a ring on one of his fingers.

"Imbecile, set your eye on that and admit me without more ado!"

The majordomo was thunderstruck. Indeed, a blast from the heavens would have jarred him less.

"Open, then!"

The majordomo threw back the bolts and the carter pushed his way in. That ring on a carter's finger? The majordomo felt himself slipping into a fantastic dream.

"Take me to the baron."

Vastly subdued the majordomo preceded the carter into the office of the embassy. There he left the strange guest and went in search of the baron. The ambassador was in his study, reading.

"Your excellency, there is a man in the office who desires to see you quickly."

The ambassador laid down his book. "Upon what pretense did he gain admittance at this hour?" he demanded.

"I refused him admittance, your excellency, because he was dressed like a carter——"

"A carter!" The ambassador wrathfully jumped to his feet.

"One moment, your excellency. He wore a ring on his finger, and I could not refuse him."

"A ring, you say?"

Guarding his voice with his hand, the majordomo whispered two words.

"Here, and dressed like a carter? What the devil!" The ambassador rushed from the study.

It was dark in the embassy office. Quickly the ambassador lighted some candles. Gas would be too bright for such a meeting.

"Well, your excellency?" said a voice from the leather lounge.

"Who are you?" For this was not the voice the baron expected to hear.

"My name at present does not matter. The news I bring is far more important. His majesty emphatically declines any alliance with the House of Ehrenstein."

The ambassador stumbled into a chair, his mind dulled, his shoulders inert. This was a blow.

"Declines?" he murmured.

"He repudiates his uncle's negotiations absolutely."

"Damnation!" swore the ambassador, coming to life once more.

"The exact word used by the prince; in fact, the word has become common property in the last forty-eight hours. Now then, what's to be done? What do you suggest?"

"This means war. The duke will never swallow such an insult."

"War! It looks as if you and I, baron, shall not accompany the King of Prussia into Alsace-Lorraine. We shall have entertainment at home."

"This is horrible!"

"The devil of a muddle!"

"But what possessed the prince to blunder like this?"

"The prince really is not to blame. Our king, baron, is a young colt. A few months ago he gave his royal uncle carte blanche to seek a wife for him. Politics demanded an alliance between Jugendheit and Ehrenstein. There have been too many years of useless antagonism. On the head of this bolt from

heaven comes the declaration of his majesty that he will marry any other princess on the continent."

"They will pull this place down, brick by brick!"

"Let them! We have ten thousand more troops than Ehrenstein."

"You young men are a pack of fools!"

"Softly, baron."

"You would like nothing better than war."

"Unless it is peace."

"Where is the king?"

The carter smiled. "He is hunting, they say, with the Crown Prince of Bavaria."

"But you, why have you come dressed like this?"

"That is a little secret which I am not at liberty to disclose."

"But, great God, what's to be done?"

"Lie," urbanely.

"What good will lies do?"

"They will suspend the catastrophe till we are ready to meet it. The marriage is not to take place till spring. That will give us plenty of time. After the coronation his majesty may be brought to reason. This marriage must not fall through now. The grand duke will not care to become the laughing-stock of Europe. The prince's advice is for you to go about your affairs as usual. Only one man must be taken into your confidence, and that man is Herbeck. If any one can straighten out his end of the tangle it is he. He is a big man, of fertile invention; he will understand. If this thing falls through his honors will fall with it. He will work toward peace, though from what I have learned the duke would not shun war."

"Where is the prince?"

"Wherever he is, he is working for the best interests of the state. Don't worry about his royal highness; he's a man."

"When did you come?"

"This morning. Though I have been here before in this same guise."

"There is the Bavarian princess," remarked the ambassador musingly.

"Ha! A good thought! But the king

is romantic; she is older than he, and ugly."

"You are not telling me everything," intuitively.

"I know it. I am telling you all that is at present necessary."

"You make me the unhappiest man in the kingdom! I have worked so hard and long toward this end. When did the king decline this alliance?"

"Evidently the moment he heard of it. I have his letter in my pocket. I am requested to read it to you. Listen:

"MY ILLUSTRIOUS AND INDUSTRIOUS UNCLE: I regret exceedingly that at this late day I should cause you political embarrassment; but when I gave my consent to the espousal of any of the various princesses at liberty, surely it was understood that Ehrenstein was not to be considered. I refuse to marry the daughter of the man who privately strove to cover my father with contumely, who dared impute to him a crime that was any man's but my father's. I realize that certain policies called for this stroke on your part, but it cannot be. My dear uncle, you have dug a fine pit, and I hope you will find a safe way out of it. I refuse to marry the Princess Hildegard. This is final. It can be arranged without any discredit to the duke or to yourself. Let it be said that her serene highness has thrown me over. I sha'n't go to war about it.

FREDERICK.

"Observe 'My illustrious and industrious uncle!'" laughed the carter without mirth. "Our king, you will see, has a graceful style."

"Your tone is not respectful," warned the ambassador.

"Neither is the state of my mind. Oh, my king is a fine fellow; he will settle down like his father before him; but to-day—" The carter dropped his arms dejectedly.

"There is something going on."

"What, you are likely to learn at any moment. Pardon me, baron, but if I dared I would tell you all. But his highness' commands are over me and I must obey them. It would be a mental relief to tell some one."

"Curse these opera-dancers!"

The carter laughed. "Aye, where kings are concerned. But you do him injustice. Frederick is as mild as Strephon." He gained his feet. He was

young, pleasant of face, but a thorough soldier.

"You are Lieutenant von Radenstein!" cried the ambassador. "I recognize you now."

"Thanks, your excellency!"

"You are in the royal household, the regent's invisible arm. I have heard a good deal about you. I knew your father well."

"Again, thanks. Now, the regent has heard certain rumors regarding an American named Carmichael, a consul. He is often seen with her highness. Rather an extraordinary privilege."

"Rest your mind there, lieutenant. This Carmichael is harmless. You understand, her highness has not always been surrounded by royal etiquette. She has had her freedom too long not to grow restive under restraint. The American is a pleasant fellow, but not worth considering. Americans will never understand the ways of court life. Still, he is a gentleman, and so far there is nothing compromising in that situation. He can be eliminated at any time."

"That is reassuring. You will see the chancellor to-night and show him this letter?"

"I will, and God help us all to straighten out this blunder!"

"Amen to that! One word more, and then I'm off. If a butcher or a baker, or even a mountaineer pulls the bell-cord and shows this ring, admit him without fail. He will have vital news. And now, good night and good luck to your excellency!"

For half an hour the ambassador remained staring at the candlesticks. By and by he resumed his chair. What should he do? Where should he begin? Supposing the chancellor should look at the situation adversely, from the duke's angle of vision, should the duke learn? There was but one thing to do and that was to go boldly to Herbeck and lay the matter before him frankly. Neither Jugendheit nor Ehrenstein wanted war. The chancellor was wise; it would be better to dally with the truth than needlessly to sacrifice ten thousand lives. But what had the lieu-

tenant further to conceal? The ambassador wanted no dinner. He rang for his hat and coat, and twenty minutes later he was in the chancellor's cabinet.

"You seem out of health, baron," was the chancellor's greeting.

"I am indeed that, count. I received a letter to-day from the prince regent. It was sent to him by his majesty, who is hunting in Bavaria. Read it, count, but I pray to you to do nothing hastily."

The chancellor did not open the letter, he merely balanced it. That so light a thing should be so heavy with dark portents! His accustomed pallor assumed a grayish tinge.

"So his majesty declines?" he said evenly.

"You have already heard?" cried the amazed ambassador.

"Nothing; I surmise. The hour, your appearance, the letter—to what else could they point? I was afraid all along. Strange instinct we have at times. The regent is to be pitied; he took too much for granted. He has been used to power one day too long. Ah, if his majesty could but see her, could only know how lovely she is in heart and mind and face! Is she not worthy a crown?"

"Herbeck, nothing would please me better, nothing would afford my country greater pleasure and satisfaction, than to see this marriage consummated. It would nail that baseless lie which has so long been current."

"I believe you. We two peoples should be friendly. It has taken me months to bring this matter round. The duke rebelled; her highness scorned the hand of Frederick. One by one I had to overcome their objections—to this end. The past refuses to be buried. Still, if you saw all the evidence in the case you would not blame the duke for his attitude."

"But those documents are rank forgeries!"

"So they may be, but that has not been proved."

"Why should his late majesty abduct the daughter of the grand duke?

For what benefits? To what end? Ah, count, if some motive could be brought forward, some motive that could stand!"

"Motives, my friend? They spring from the most unheard-of places. And motives in action are always based on impulses. But let us waste no time on retrospection. It is the present which confronts us. You do not want war."

"No more do you."

"What remedy do you suggest?"

"I ask, nay, I plead that question of you."

"I represent the offended party." The chancellor's gaunt features lighted with a transient smile. "Proceed, baron."

"I suggest, then, that the duke must not know."

"Agreed. Go on."

"You will put the matter before her highness."

"That will be difficult."

"Let her repudiate the negotiations. Let her say that she has changed her mind. His majesty is quite willing that the humiliation be his."

"That is generous. But supposing she has set her heart on the crown of Jugendheit? What then?"

The baron bit the ends of his mustache.

"Supposing that?" the chancellor pressed relentlessly.

"In that event, the affair is no longer in our hands but in God's."

"As all affairs are. Is there no way of changing the king's mind?"

"Read the letter, count," said the ambassador.

Herbeck hunted for the postmark; Bavaria. He read the letter. There was nothing between the lines. It was the work of rather an irresponsible boy.

"May I take this to her highness?"

"I'm afraid——"

"I promise its contents will not go beyond her eye."

"I will take the risk."

"His majesty is very young," was the chancellor's comment.

"Young! He is a child. He has been in his palace twice in ten years. He is travel-mad. He has been wandering in France, Holland, England,

Belgium. He tells his uncle to play the king till the coronation. Imagine it! And the prince has found this authority so pleasant and natural that he took it for granted that his majesty would marry whomever he selected for him. To have allowed us to go forward, as we have done, believing that he had the whole confidence of the king!"

Herbeck consulted his watch. It was half after six. Her highness did not dine till eight.

"I will go to her highness immediately, baron. I will return the letter by messenger, and he will tell you the result of the interview."

"God be with you," said the ambassador, preparing to take his leave, "for all women are contrary."

After the baron was gone the chancellor paced the room with halting step. Then, toward the wraith of his ambition he waved a hand as if to explain how futile are the schemes of men. He shook himself free from this idle moment and proceeded to the apartments of her highness. Would she toss aside this crown, or would she fight for it? He found her alone.

"Well, my good fairy, what is in your magic wand to-night?" she asked. How fond she was of this great good man, and how lonely he always seemed!

He saluted her hand respectfully. "I am not a good fairy to-night, your highness. On the contrary, I am an ogre. I have here a letter. I have given my word that its contents shall not be repeated to the duke, your father. If I let you read it, will you agree to that?"

"And who has written this letter?" non-committally.

"His majesty, the King of Jugendheit," slowly.

"A letter from the king?" she cried, curious. "Should it not be brought to me on a golden salver?"

"It is probable that I am bringing it to you at the end—of a bayonet," solemnly. "If the duke learns its contents the inevitable result will be war."

A silence fell upon them and grew. This was the bitterest moment but one in the chancellor's life.

"I believe," she said finally, "that it will not be necessary to read his majesty's letter. He declines the honor of my hand; is that not it?"

The chancellor signified that it was.

"Ah!" with a note of pride in her voice and a flash in her fine eyes. "And I?"

"You will tell the duke that you have changed your mind," gravely.

"Do princesses change their minds like this?"

"They have often done so."

"In spite of publicity?"

"Yes, your highness."

"And if I refuse to change my mind?"

"I am resigned to any and all events."

"War." Her face was serious. "And what has the king to suggest?"

"He proposes to accept the humiliation of being rejected by you."

"Why, this is a gallant king! Pouff! There goes a crown of thistledown."

She smiled at the chancellor, then she laughed. There was nothing but youth in the laughter, youth and gladness.

"Oh, I knew that you were a good fairy. Listen to me. I declare to you that I am happier at this moment than I have been in days. To marry a man I have never seen, to become the wife of a man who is nothing to me, whose looks, character, and habits are unknown; why, I have lived in a kind of horror. You did not find me soon enough; there are yet some popular ideas in my head which are alien to the minds of princesses. I am free!" And she uttered the words as with the breath of spring.

The chancellor's shoulders drooped a trifle more, and his hand closed down over the letter. Otherwise there was no notable change in his appearance. He was always guarding the muscles of his face. Inscrutability is the first lesson of the diplomat; and he had learned it thirty years before.

"There will be no war," resumed her highness. "I know my father; our wills may clash, but in this instance mine shall be the stronger."

"But this is not the end."

"You mean that there will be other kings?" She had not thought of this, and some of the brightness vanished from her face.

"Yes, there will be other kings. I am sorry. What young girl has not her dream of romance? But princesses must not have romances. Yours, my child, must be a political marriage. It is a harsh decree."

"Have not princesses married commoners?"

"Never wisely. Your highness will not make a mistake like that."

"My highness will or will not marry, as she pleases. Am I a chattel, that I am to be offered across this frontier or that?"

The chancellor moved uneasily. "If your highness loved out of your class, which I know you do not, I should be worried."

"And if I did?" with a rebel tilt to her chin.

"Till that moment arrives I shall not borrow trouble. You will, then, tell the duke that you have changed your mind, that you have reconsidered?"

"This evening. Now, godfather, you may kiss her serene highness on the forehead."

"This honor to me?" The chancellor trembled.

"Even so."

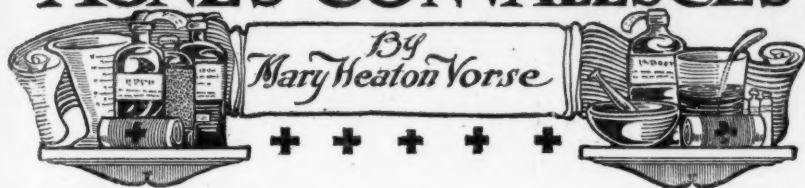
He did not touch her with his hands, but the kiss he put on her forehead was a benediction.

"You may go now," she said, "for I shall need the whole room to dance in. I am free, if only for a little while!"

Outside the door the chancellor paused. She was singing. It was the same aria he had heard that memorable night when he found her in the dim garret.

TO BE CONTINUED.

AGNES CONVALESCES



AS I was coming down the street I noticed, as soon as I got in sight of the house, a large number of people gathered together. Instinct told me that something in my family had broken loose again. A decrepit white horse stood to one side, a man at his bit, a crowd around him. In a vehicle, from which the horse had evidently been detached, sat a mighty old woman. Far up the street as I was, she seemed incredibly fat. The vehicle was of the kind still known in our country districts as the "shay."

Grouped around the shay and its occupant was another crowd. The fat lady was making an oration. As I approached closer, the spectacle of my cook, Seraphy, greeted my eyes. She strode across the lawn, gaunt and gray as a tree from which the leaves have fallen. Her hair was slicked neatly back and done in a knot in the back about as ornamental as a hickory walnut. In her right hand she brandished a wooden spoon to which adhered some of the batter of the pudding that she had been stirring up.

"'Twas nary Prestin done it," she began, as soon as she was in ear-shot of the woman sitting in the shay.

"It came out of that very door!" the woman cried.

"'Tis manny a thing that's not Prestins comes out of yon door—an' comes quick, too," responded my cook. "Scissors-grinders an' book-agints an' soap-peddlers—they do be comin' out

quicker'n they do be goin' in whin I ketch 'em!" At the word "soap-agents" the fat woman wriggled uncomfortably in her seat and blushed.

"An' it don't make 'em Prestins 'cause you find 'em comin' out iv that front door——"

"What's all this?" I asked.

Seraphy and the woman in the shay jumped together for the first word, but Seraphy got it.

"'Tis th' soap-agint there," she cried, "blamin' it on us becuz that old, long-legged, Jew-nosed, cross-eyed, bob-tailed, parrot-kneed, whitewashed horse took a notion in her head to run away for the first time this thirty years, Mis' Prestin! Th' spavined, splay-footed thing it is, bad luck to it! An' 'tis a miracle, wid her sittin' behin' it, that it iver made f'r to run——"

"That'll do, that'll do, Seraphy," said I.

"An' 'tis hersilf that's blamin' it on us, becuz I wuz sayin' to her a half-hour ago that I wasn't wan that c'u'd be talked over into buyin' soap for to be gettin' premium plush lamps f'r th' back paarlor! F'r mind, Mis' Prestin, th' time we bought th' soap from th' Williams kids so they c'u'd get a waggin to take out their little brother in, an' they come wid it an' stole th' muskmelons off us! 'Twas well we knew from th' tracks in th' lawn, an' from that day to this I've always bought the soap off of th' grocer-boy, an' always will, so hilt me Hivin'!"

"That will do, Seraphy," said I.

"Madam," the woman in the car began again, "'tis true that your servant treated me shameful, so she did! She

just stuck out her nose on me through a crack in the door, and says she: 'We don't want nothing.' 'You don't know what I got,' says I, 'the best soap——' 'Me back attic's full av th' best soap,' says she, 'an' th' melon-vines is empty, be th' same token.' And I will say, while I have to earn my own living, I always act like a lady.' 'Act like a lady,' says I, 'and folks will treat you like a lady.' And so they all do but her; and had you been home, ma'am, yourself, you'd have let me show you the best soap for toilet and laundry purposes——"

"But what," interrupted I, "has this got to do with the accident?"

"When I come past this house next time something that looked like a big monkey on all fours, dressed in clothes and a bunnit—I never see the like in my born days—comes running out and makes under the legs of that there horse; he's all in a tremble yet! What run out of your house struck him all of a heap, and it's the Lord's own mussy that he didn't break more than a shaft or a trace on me! It'd 'a' been an awful shock if he'd 'a' dumped me out! And here I was, left in the middle of the road, and he run off, and my nerve has suffered something awful!"

Here Seraphy broke out.

"A big monkey on all fours," says she. "Jimmie's to school, ain't he, an' Edith's to school, an' Osborn's to college; an' Jimmie ain't got no animals larger'n field-mice an' canary-birds!"

"Where's Agnes?" I asked Seraphy.

"'Twas Miss Maria herself tuk Agnes away this mornin'."

My seven-year-old niece, Agnes, is visiting us without her mother. My sister-in-law, Estelle, especially confided her to Maria's charge, with the plea that I had enough to do with my own children. The real reason is that she has more confidence in Maria's discipline than in mine. While I do not mean to criticize Estelle, had I been in her place, I should have preferred to have my child looked after by the mother of three fairly well-behaved children than by her unmarried sister.

However, that's neither here nor there. By this time the men that had been gathered around the horse patching up the harness had finished, and began to hitch up again. Seraphy continued to mutter things about: "It wuz mean to blame it on us—th' thing that scared yonder wobble-legged, whapper-jawed skate——"

At that moment the soap-lady gave a yell and cried:

"There it comes! There it is! That's it!"

A strange creature came running down the road at full speed. Curls clapped up and down on either side of its head, on which was perched a bonnet, and it had on a pair of corsets, which were partially concealed by a species of dress. The thing ran as like a creature possessed, and every once in a while stopped to claw at its head-gear.

The horse trembled and reared again, and the crowd picked up sticks and stones to throw at it; but Seraphy waved aloft her pudding-stick.

"Hand's off!" she cried. "I'll scratch th' face off anny wan that harrums it —'tis th' Piker dog!"

At the sound of the familiar voice, our dog Piker bounded to Seraphy. She picked him up and made off with him, saying:

"How ye cum by Miss Maria's curls an' corsets I dunno!" For indeed the dog was wearing some of Maria's false hair, and what was left of her bonnet adorned his head.

I entered my house just a moment after my sister Maria, who came from the other direction. Agnes, dressed in white and blue ribbons, with her hair neatly combed and tied with a large blue bow, sat in the drawing-room, a gilt and white book in her hand, and a vase of lilies behind her. She looked to me far more virtuous than is natural for faulty human nature. Seraphy, Piker in her arms, was standing before Agnes.

"An' it's just like this I'm goin' to kape him until y'r Aunt Maria comes in! You done it, an' I know you done it!"

"I did what, Seraphy?" Agnes emphasized the "did" just enough to be a polite reproof.

"An' I'll tell you how I know you done it! Jimmie don't know where y'r aunt kapes her hair. 'Twas th' hair Miss Maria bought before th' last, an' it didn't match, an' she wuz goin' to send it back, an' ye tuk it an' curled it wid tongs—Edith's tongs! It ain't no good makin' angil eyes at me, Agnes; I seen you wid them tongs in th' kitchen!"

Hearing us behind her, Seraphy turned.

"Yis, ma'am—Miss Maria. I seen her wid Edith's tongs in me own coal-stove! 'What ye doin' wid them tongs?' sez I. 'Ye ain't goin' to burn off y'r hair, Agnes?' 'Oh, no,' sez she, sweet as ras'berry jam. 'I'm just goin' to curl my dolly's hair, Seraphy—' That wuz th' smell you wuz complainin' about, Miss Maria. 'Twas that doll's hair burnin' an' its wax face meltin' off!"

"And then," went on Agnes, "afterward, I thought how nice it would be to have an Aunt Maria dolly, so I dressed up Piker in a few things of Aunt Maria's, and Piker ran off, and he scared the horse, and I was mortified to death because his corsets showed, and he's gone up-town that way, and it's not ladylike, even when you're a dog, to have your corsets show."

"Come here, Agnes," said Maria, "let's talk together. My dear little niece knows, doesn't she, that she shouldn't take other people's things?"

Agnes put her finger in her mouth.

"Answer auntie, darling. Doesn't Agnes know that she shouldn't take auntie's things?"

"You said that you wished the old scratch would take the corsets just the other day!" Agnes asserted.

Seraphy snickered.

"I thought my little girl," pursued Maria, "didn't want to go out with auntie this morning because she wasn't feeling well."

"I wasn't feeling well, and I'm not feeling well now," responded Agnes.

"And there's another thing," said

Maria. "Don't you know it's wrong to play with fire?"

"No one ever told me that curling hair was playing with fire. Children should be treated with justice. It isn't just to say I was playing with fire when I was heating tongs. Children remember unjust acts for years and years. My mama read it out of a book to Eddie Parker's mama, and I was in the room, so I know!"

"I'm not going to bandy any more words with you," said Maria to Agnes. "I'm going to put you in the spare chamber until you can come and tell auntie you're sorry."

As Agnes was being led up-stairs, I heard her saying:

"What am I being punished for?"

"You know very well," replied her aunt dryly.

As the door closed, Agnes fired the parting shot.

"I don't feel well, Aunt Maria!" she moaned. "It's cruel to punish a child when it doesn't feel well!"

During the time that Agnes was in the spare bedroom presumably reflecting, Maria was as uneasy as a hen on hot eggs. She walked up and down the floor, saying: "Poor little thing, I don't believe she meant a bit of harm by it. Children do so many things just from the pure joy of living."

"But," said I, "Maria, it wasn't the pure joy of living that made her lace those corsets of yours on the Piker dog. It wasn't pure high spirits that made her take your second-best bonnet and tie on Piker's head." I did not mention the false hair because Maria is rather sensitive about it.

But to this Maria only answered mournfully: "I'm afraid she's crying her eyes out up-stairs. Agnes, you know, has never been one of those hard, robust children like our children, Editha. She's high-strung; she's made of very sensitive material, Editha, and I wouldn't for the world give her a nervous shock, just to maintain my ideas of discipline."

In giving advice to me about punishing my children, Maria has always been so cocksure that I wasn't sorry to

have her have a little experience of her own. One feels very differently about the punishments one administers with one's own hand. After Agnes had been up-stairs about half an hour—and it was half an hour of torment for poor Maria—she finally went up to see how Agnes was getting along.

When she opened the door there was a second's silence, one of those impressive, portentous silences, like the stillness of the air before a terrible storm. Then I heard Maria's voice, shocked beyond expression, cry out:

"Why, Agnes Hallowell, *what* are you doing? Whatever put such an idea into your head? Why, I never *heard* of such a thing! I've never in all my life heard of a child, not one, with all the awful things they do, lick the paper off the wall!"

Agnes only wept. Her weeping didn't sound to me the tears that well from a contrite heart.

"Editha," called my distracted sister, "I wish you'd step here a minute. Agnes has been licking the paper from the wall. I came in quietly, and I found her at it. She was spitting on the wall-paper, Editha, and after that she scraped the moistened part off with her nails."

Through her sobs I could make out Agnes' protest.

"'Twasn't all spit an' nails, Aunt Maria; 'twasn't all spit an' nails! It was some water from the pitcher and the paper-knife."

I entered the room. Sure enough, there was a long, irregular place where Agnes had peeled the paper from the wall.

"I saw you licking the paper with your tongue when I came in," cried my outraged sister. "I saw you spitting!"

From Agnes' sobs the words were distinguished:

"My mama says no one should ever say 'spit'; 'tish't nice."

It was here that Maria's patience gave way for good.

"Don't you quote to me, you naughty child, what your mama says; your mama will be as shocked as I am. Say

what you like about taking my bonnet and my clothes, Agnes; but any child knows that it's naughty to scratch paper from walls with nails or with paper-knives, whether it's been told or not. Why, Editha, I've never seen a child so ingeniously naughty! While our children may be trying sometimes, I've never known one, not one, to be as wantonly destructive as Agnes!"

"I just picked at the wall-paper," Agnes sobbed, "because I felt nervous. I'm a very high-strung child, Aunt Maria."

"Well," said Maria, "you'll be more high-strung in a minute. I'm going to spank you, Agnes! That'll teach you to be less nervous, and teach you to leave your auntie's things alone. It'll teach you not to maltreat the poor Piker dog—she laced the corset awfully tightly, Editha!"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" cried Agnes. "You're not fair, Aunt Maria, you're not fair! If I didn't feel sick, I wouldn't ever have clawed paper from walls. Everybody ought to be sure that a child isn't sick before they call it naughty!"

"Editha!" Maria threw at me, her face quite frozen with indignation. "If that child ever quotes another word from a child-culture book, I feel that I shall burst!"

Here Agnes' sobs suddenly stopped. She looked at her aunt, interest sparkling through her tears.

"How do people burst, Aunt Maria?" she inquired politely. "How do they look when they burst?"

Here Maria hustled her niece into her own room and closed the door. I went to my room.

I heard Maria's voice rising and falling in admonition. Agnes had stopped crying. I knew just exactly with what a round-eyed interest she was gazing at Maria's mouth while Maria lectured her.

Then there came a pause. Instead of the deafening roar I expected—utter silence, and Maria poked her head out of the room.

"Editha," she called. "Agnes has got some very peculiar spots!"

I entered the room, and Agnes turned a triumphant face on me.

"I told you I was sick, Aunt Editha. I knew it was sickness made me peel off that wall-paper. I've got spots—I've got something!"

It had been a sore point with Agnes that she had never before had any contagious disease.

"Those spots," I said, "look to me remarkably like the chicken-pox."

"The chicken-pox!" Maria exclaimed. "Well, now, of course, I suppose, I can't spank her!"

I shall never know whether Maria said those words in regret or in relief; I think a little of both.

Agnes seated herself upon a chair. She spread out her dress around her with that precision that so often gives her the effect of a frilly flower. She folded her hands and, looking with her large, blue eyes at her aunt:

"People can't act natural, Aunt Maria," she announced, "when they have the chicken-pox."

It was not long before the doctor came and confirmed my diagnosis. I've never before known a child who was not rendered cross by this disease, but Agnes, apparently, the moment that the spots came out, underwent an entire change of heart. She treated all of us with a touching politeness and patience. In fact, she was so well behaved that I became suspicious. Maria, however, was horribly worried.

"Editha," she told me, "there's something unnatural about Agnes' behavior. I've never seen a child act like this with the chicken-pox, or with anything. Do you remember Osborn, how cross he was with the mumps? Why, he threw a block at me, I distinctly remember to this day, and hit my front tooth, and I thought it was going to come out for a moment! Of course, one wouldn't expect anything else from Edith or Jimmie except that they *would* be cross when they had things. But it doesn't seem wholesome to me, Editha, to have a child so good, especially with the chicken-pox!"

Agnes' sweet behavior affected every one. Even my daughter Edith, who is

of the age when a girl considers children of Agnes' a great nuisance, was kind to her cousin, while Jimmie was really attentive, taking his turn at amusing Agnes by reading aloud to her, while Maria worried more from day to day.

"She doesn't seem to me to talk naturally," Maria told me anxiously. "I think the fever is making her delirious. She doesn't talk like a child any more."

"Why, Maria," I replied, "how can a child be delirious with only two degrees of fever?"

"Don't tell me!" said Maria. "Agnes may be brought up according to child-culture rules, but no child who isn't delirious would say: 'Don't trouble yourself on my account, auntie; just let me lie here. I don't want to string your best buttons for fear I might lose one.' I'd offered her my best buttons that I'm keeping for the time when people will be having buttons again, you know; she's always wanted to string them. If she isn't delirious, then she has a terrible apathy! It's her subconscious nature coming out in sickness." Since Maria has been to some "New Thought" lectures, she has been very keen on the subconscious phenomena.

Soon after this I found Edith coming out of Agnes' room with her eyes full of tears.

"She's been begging my pardon," Edith choked, "for everything she's ever done to annoy me! She said she had something to confess to me, and that was that she had tagged me around pretending that she didn't know that I didn't want her, when she knew all the time, and that she now realizes that she shouldn't pretend things like that!"

"Did she use the word 'realize'?" I asked.

"Yes—she said 'realize' just like that." Here Edith's voice choked again.

I suppose it shows a hardened nature, and may perhaps reflect badly upon my own children, but all these manifestations made me wonder what it was Agnes had up her sleeve. Agnes is a fascinating little thing, and extremely pretty—a natural child, except

as she has learned the child-culture phraseology from Estelle. At such moments, when she springs words from the child-culture books upon one, one perfectly understands the Slaughter of the Innocents. She's been made something of a little prig of, but that, of course, I don't blame her for, for underneath is the natural child, full of wholesome interest in the things that children should be interested in, and full of that natural childish mischief which is so funny when you tell about it afterward, and which makes you so raw in the temper when it happens.

I must say that Agnes' saintly conduct would have been more effective with some other kind of disease than chicken-pox. Neither the mumps nor the chicken-pox lends itself to eyes cast starlike to Heaven, and Agnes was forever rolling her eyes upward. If you came into the room, you would find her looking up at the topmost pane of the window, with her hands crossed quietly on her breast.

Meantime, I noticed that there was a certain triumphant air about Seraphy. There are moments in this good woman's life when she goes around with an irritating air of having a good joke on the universe, and every one in it, including yourself. But Seraphy isn't one who can keep things entirely to herself. Sooner or later they will out; and, sure enough, one day when I was in the kitchen, after I had ordered the meals, Seraphy looked around mysteriously. She looked into the buttery and through the slide that leads out into the butler's pantry, and peered carefully around to see that no one was within ear-shot.

"Mis' Prestin," she announced, "I got somp'n to tell you that I can't tell you if you won't promise not t' let it go no further."

"Why, certainly, Seraphy," I said, "it shall go no further."

"'Tis Miss M'riar 'spec'ly I don't want to know nothin' about it; an' please, Mis' Prestin, don't be speakin' av it to Jimmie or anny wan—it's just goin' t' be like you didn't know it!"

"I'm not likely to repeat to Miss Maria or to any one anything that you

tell me, Seraphy," I said, with some dignity.

"All right, thin," responded my cook. There was a humorous twinkle in her shrewd gray eye.

"Mis' Prestin," she asked, "d'you know what them limbs is up to? 'Tis Agnes an' Jimmie I do be talkin' about!" She looked around cautiously again, and then took out from under her apron a book. I recognized it as a small volume that had been given to me by a pious friend in my own childhood. Its name was, "Little Mary and Her Parents." It was the story of the life and death of a child of angelic sweetness, whose father, who had strayed from the fold, was brought back by the devotional attitude of his little daughter. In it, Little Mary's mannerisms were accurately described.

As she lay there day after day, her little thin white hands folded upon her breast, her large blue orbs raised to Heaven, it seemed to those who beheld her as if she were already in the company of the angels. No one could permit himself to look at her without dropping a silent tear.

Seraphy rested a bony finger on this passage.

"Aha!" she chortled. "D'you note Agnes, Mis' Prestin? An' look-a here!" I read:

She called to her sister Elizabeth. "Elizabeth," she said, with a sweet smile, although tears welled to her eyes, "I realize that I have not always acted toward you as I should. I have been trying to you in my childish way. Forgive me, Elizabeth—I know better now!" And Elizabeth, making some pretext for leaving the room, wept silently.

"Aha!" again chortled Seraphy. "D'you mind how she tuk in Edith? 'Realize,' says she! Wuz it Jimmie put her up to it, or wuz she afther thinkin' it up herself, I dunno! But 'tis th' two av them is in it together. Jimmie do be readin' her th' book whiniver there's a chanst, an' iv'rythin' new he reads about 'Little Mary—' here Seraphy let out what might be termed a snort—" 'tis Agnes acts it out on you whin you come in. Last time she tried th' shinnanigan on me. 'Dear Seraphy,' sez she, 'fergive me f'r takin' th' cook-

ies whin you wasn't lookin'.' I winked to her wid me eye. 'What you doin' that f'r?' sez she, natural as you please! An' I laid me finger alongside me nose, an' winked knowin'like ag'in. 'Twas thin that Agnes stuck out *her* tongue at me. An' Miss M'riar come into th' room, an' quick she claps her han's crosswise on her chist an' looks up to th' sky an' sez: 'I give you too much trouble, dear Aunt M'riar!' I seen Jimmie smugglin' th' book under his coat. You can always tell whin he's got somethin' doin' as plain as you can see a squirrel's got nuts in his cheeks! 'Tain't that way wid Agnes. But 'tis th' whole lot av us has got fooled good an' plinty! An' now, don't you be goin' an' tellin' Miss M'riar, because 'twould all be blamed on Jimmie, an' we don't none av us know wuz it he or her. Whin I wuz doin' his room, I foun' it hid under th' mattress. 'What-iver is "Little Mary an' Her Parints" doin' here?' sez I! That's how I foun' it out on 'em, Mis' Prestin—an' Agnes ain't so slow she don't know I'm on to 'em!"

I must say I was glad that Seraphy had made me promise not to tell Maria, otherwise, of course, I should have felt that I should not have permitted the swindle to go on. But I reflected that, anyway, the chicken-pox was nearly over, and, besides that, I suppose I, like Seraphy, was tired having Jimmie blamed for all Agnes' peccadillos.

There came a definite moment when Maria's lively anxiety about Agnes suddenly cooled. I can't tell exactly how I noticed it—she was just as attentive as usual, but there was that in her manner which made me realize that her fears about Agnes' being transported to a better world had been definitely allayed.

"I wonder," thought I, "I wonder if she's found Agnes out. If she has, she's keeping quiet about it. I wonder why." Because I had thought, just as Seraphy had, that the moment Maria knew, she would tell us loudly how Jimmie had put his innocent little cousin up to this performance. But Maria never batted an eyelash.

Agnes, however, noticed nothing, and kept on being more and more pious. She quoted whole paragraphs of Little Mary's words, having such an enjoyment in her performance that she didn't notice that they failed to touch as responsive a chord in her aunt's heart as they had hitherto.

One day shortly after this Maria and I were both in Agnes' room, and, it being noon, Henry dropped in to see how she was. I may add that my husband also had been somewhat disquieted by Agnes' piety. He thought that a child must be quite sick to talk as she did, although I said to him:

"Henry, it's not been my experience that sick people overwhelm you with touching meekness. Most people *I've* known have got crosser as they've got sicker, up to the point of actual exhaustion and delirium."

But instead of being comforted by this, he merely shook his head, and told me that I must not be sarcastic about a sick child. There are moments when even the best of husbands are trying.

The morning I am speaking of, Agnes lay in her most angelic posture, her "orbs" upon her uncle, and said:

"How good you've all been to me, dear Uncle Henry!"

Here Seraphy brought Agnes' tray, and Jimmie shuffled into the room afterward.

"I don't feel as if I could eat," said Agnes; but it seemed to me that her eyes rested longingly upon the delicacies that Seraphy had prepared.

"I don't feel strong enough to eat," she went on.

Here Edith burst into the room. In her hand she held a little faded red book, on which was written, with ornamental flourishes: "Little Mary and Her Parents."

"Look at this, mother!" she sputtered indignantly. "See what I found in Jimmie's room!"

"You hadn't any business in my room!" cried Jimmie. "She's always snoopin', mother, snoopin' 'round an' gettin' what she hadn't oughter!"

But Edith paid no attention.

"Look at this!" she repeated. "See

here what Jimmie's been reading to Agnes—a disgusting old Sunday-school book!"

"What's this?" Henry asked.

"It's that Agnes' been fooling every one of us! And when I think—when I *think*," cried my enraged daughter, "that I *cried*, almost—yes, actually cried—when that little minx there begged my pardon for having tagged me around—and goodness knows I had a hard enough time of it with her on my heels every minute—and that she's been making me feel like a mean pill all the time she's been ill—why, I could simply *bust*!"

Henry here glanced rapidly through the book and burst out into what seemed to me quite untimely mirth, because it *was* extremely naughty of Agnes and Jimmie to act as they had and take in the whole family and worry poor Maria so.

I looked at Seraphy, to see if she was going to show that she knew. But, no.

"Why, Agnes!" she cried. "Why, Jimmie! Who'd 'a' thought it av ye! I wouldn't 'a' believed you'd 'a' acted so bad, Agnes Hallowell!"

"Why, *Agnes*!" cried Maria, but without her voice ringing very true. "How could you deceive your poor auntie so!"

And I thought it as well to pretend I didn't know, since neither Maria nor Seraphy gave herself away.

"Horrid little thing!" cried Edith. "I shall never forgive her—never, mother—for letting us all in! She just did us! And nobody need try to blame it on Jimmie," cried his sister truculently, "for if Jimmie *did* read about it to her, 'twasn't Jimmie lifted Agnes' eyes up to Heaven, and made her head droop like a dying lily—and mighty homely she looked, too, I can tell her, with her face all cluttered up with chicken-pox!"

Here Agnes burst into a loud and tearless wail.

"They're not kind to me, Aunt Editha!" she bawled. "They're not kind to me! I don't like to be laughed at—it's always been bad for me to be laughed at, and Uncle Henry laughs

at me, and Seraphy jumps on me; and I don't like her any more, 'cause she winked at me, and put her finger beside her nose the other day, and I wouldn't have told on her if she hadn't been horrid! Nobody's kind to me but Jimmie——"

"Aw, shut up!" growled Jimmie.

"Well," said I, "I think we all of us are exciting this child too much. After all, she's been sick—though I can't say that I consider her very sick now."

"Aren't you going to *say* anything to her about her actions?" queried Maria.

"No, I'll leave that to you," I had the satisfaction of telling Maria. "You can say all that's necessary. Agnes is in your charge, Maria."

With that I cleared them all out of the room.

Half an hour later, Seraphy took a perfectly empty, clean-licked tray out of Agnes' room. Agnes had got well with a bang, and it would have been far better for us if Edith had not exposed her cousin, for Agnes from that moment on was just as disagreeable as a child ordinarily is when convalescing. now that she could no longer play the entrancing game of noble little sufferer. Maria was at her wit's end to keep her amused.

Two days later Agnes demanded scissors to cut with. By this time, she was out of bed and sitting around the room, as she might have been several days before, but for Maria's anxiety; but in the afternoon she put on her dressing-gown and was put on the bed again.

Poor Maria came into my room and plumped herself down, sighing.

"Well, I shall be thankful, Editha," said she, "when that child's mother resumes her natural responsibilities!"

"I shall be glad to have Agnes out of the house, too!" chimed in my daughter.

"Oh, I didn't mean that, Edith," said Maria. "Why, where do you suppose that came from?"

She picked a piece of down off her dress.

"And there's another! How do you

suppose down came to be floating around the house?"

We were sitting in a room across the hall from Agnes' sick room. Maria arose and laboriously plodded back to Agnes.

"Why, Agnes!" she cried. "Why, Agnes!" I heard her voice rising in remonstrance. "You know well enough that you shouldn't have cut that down counterpane open!"

"I'm playing little white birds, Aunt Maria," came Agnes' voice.

"Editha," called my sister, "she's cut open that down counterpane and pulled out handfuls—yes, handfuls, and it's all over the room!"

Again came my sister's voice:

"Editha, I left my new tailored suit on Agnes' bed, and she's cut out every one of those buttonholes—cut them neatly out!"

There was a dead silence. Agnes said nothing, but sat with downcast eyes, a finger in her mouth.

"When she is well enough," at last Maria announced, "*I shall spank this bad child!*"

I heard some one coming rapidly up the stairs. It was my brother, Agnes' father. He took his daughter in his arms and pressed her to him fondly.

"My poor little girl!" he said.

"You've had a hard time of it, haven't you?"

"Yes, papa," said Agnes. "I've been awful sick."

"Poor kid!" said her father. "Father's going to stay with you until you're well enough to come home."

It seemed to me that something like "Thank God!" escaped my sister's lips.

"Well, Maria," said my brother briskly, "has Agnes been a good girl?" Maria swallowed once, and looking my brother firmly in the eye:

"A very nice girl, indeed," she said.

Editha, who had in the meantime come in and greeted her uncle, turned away to hide a sardonic smile.

"Poor little young one! Well, I hope she hasn't suffered much," went on her fond father. "I think, by the tone of your letters, Maria, that you got pretty anxious about her at one time."

"She's quite well now," said Maria, "and I pass all the responsibility of her over to you."

Here my brother picked one or two pieces of down off his cuff.

"This room seems to me remarkably full of things!" he said. He turned an accusing look on poor Maria and me.

"It doesn't seem to me," he said, "that it can be good for a sick child's lungs to breathe in stuff like this!"



AN EVEN-SONG

THE light is failing and my work is finished.
And one more kindly day the radiant glow
Of sunset with the silver stream is blending
As eventide draws near with footsteps slow.

The light is failing, and the day is dying,
It totters on the rim of that far west
Whereon a gorgeous winding-sheet is lying,
To fold it round when it shall cease its quest.

The light is failing, but my hearth is cheery,
With deep content I watch the setting sun
Throw twilight through the door—my feet are weary,
But strength is given each day's race to run.

BETH SLATER WHITSON.



The SOCIAL LADDER

By Elizabeth Duer

CHAPTER I.



R. WILLIAM PITCHER had secured for himself and his daughter the best suite of rooms on the *Leviathan*. And indeed why shouldn't he, seeing there was practically nothing in the line of luxury beyond the stretch of his purse-strings? To quote his own words, he proposed to take gilt-edged comfort for the rest of his life, and he always meant what he said.

Miss Pitcher—Moll he called her in loving memory of his dead wife—enjoyed the good things made possible by her father's money—enjoyed them all the more because the possession was sufficiently new to furnish a dazzling contrast with their earlier days of poverty in the far West, and because she was so thoroughly her father's daughter that she delighted in any enlarged range for her activities. She intended to exploit social life as he had done finance and to make an equal success of it. She had his courage, his sagacity, and was infinitely more subtle. And it was just this tact—this power of applying feminine instincts to the affairs of every-day life—that established her influence over him.

Mr. Pitcher agreed to her wishes with the tolerant amusement self-made men often accord to the fancies of their womenkind. He had educated her at the best boarding-school the West offered for female training, and mighty expensive it was. Now he was willing

to stand aside and let her show her skill in spending the money he had had the brains to make. She insisted upon moving to New York, because there, preeminently, the doings of the privileged few were daily chronicled for the edification of the envious many, and she meant to take her place among those favorites of fortune and swim with the leaders.

She selected a house in the Fifth Avenue looking out on the Park, she acquired an experienced housekeeper to run it for her, she engaged a box in the second tier at the opera, and she entertained her father's business friends at dinner. So far all was easy, but she got no further. She began to realize that the business friends were not those whose names figured in the papers; that the second tier in the opera hardly existed for the first; that certain people in New York didn't care sixpence whether she had millions or thousands; that there was something in her tone of voice that made her words sound common to herself; that the people who were willing to play with her were not the people she was clamoring to play with.

She was not one to sit down under the burden of a mistake. She shut up the house and went abroad for a year. Mr. Pitcher protested; he had just been made president of the Reciprocal Life Insurance Company and he enjoyed the position; but Moll's wishes prevailed, he obeyed orders.

Travel did a good deal for the Pitchers, especially for Mary. It taught her what to admire; it moderated the letter in her speech; and it put her in pleas-

ant relations from time to time with some of those happy mortals whose position was clearly the best. She was now on her way home to have another "try" at the social pool, and this time with an enlightened knowledge of the difficulties to be overcome.

The *Leviathan* was churning the sea with turbinate energy, the Irish coast was a matter of faith, the gray November day was typically English. Mr. Pitcher didn't like gray English days; he liked the blue skies and golden sunshine of "Amurica"; he was half sorry he had not stayed in bed till they had covered a little more distance from the colorless mother country. He came into the private cabin where his daughter sat reading and nodded his good morning without taking the trouble to speak, as if a gloom as depressing as the weather were weighing down his spirits.

He was a fine-looking man in a coarse way, with black hair growing straight upward from a low forehead, piercing black eyes, heavy, shiny eyebrows, a short nose, and large lips, loosely bound; he looked shrewd, masterful, kind, and perhaps a trifle self-indulgent. In figure he was decidedly above the medium height, with a fine pair of shoulders, but his head was awkwardly set on a short neck, and his hands and feet were plebeian.

In one of his large-knuckled hands he held a package of letters, in the other his eye-glasses. He flung himself into a deep chair, settled down almost on his shoulder-blades, and, crossing his leg, let one heel rest on the table.

"Look here, Moll," he began, "I just finished reading the mail I found waiting for me when we came aboard yesterday, and there are several things I want to talk over with you while they are fresh in my mind. In the first place, here is a letter from Billy—what a fist he writes! He says he won't stay at college on any such allowance as I make him; that he can't hold his own with other rich fellows; that he hasn't got into any of their exclusive clubs, and if I won't do better by him he means to cut the whole thing and go

into business." Mr. Pitcher shook his head and added solemnly: "I'm a rich man, but I guess even my fortune wouldn't stand Billy's going into business."

Mary understood the danger too well to laugh. Her brother, after an unaccountable visit to Aix, had left them a month before to return to college in time for the autumn term, and she was sufficiently in his confidence to guess the accumulation of debts and embarrassments that met the opening of his junior year.

He was idle, unprincipled, and rather lovable, while to a superficial wit he added a lack of discernment that made him an easy prey in the shady company he courted.

"He is doing no good at college," she said reflectively. "I advise you to pay his debts and send him out to the mine."

The advice was sound, but Mr. Pitcher, who had suffered regret all his life at not having been through college, was not prepared to accept such an overthrow of his plans for his only son. He wished to give him a polite education, crowned by a law course which should fit him to take charge of the great fortune bound to come to him some day. Always reasonable, however, he weighed his daughter's suggestion for some moments before rejecting it.

"I guess we'll pay his debts and make him stick it out," he sighed.

The girl looked out at the cold gray sea and said nothing, but there was an anxious furrow between her brows as if across the dreary wastes she saw a future marred by her brother's irresponsibility. The mental picture disturbed her just as her advice had disturbed her father, for it was characteristic of each to pursue with unflagging zeal any course of action deliberately adopted, and to resent any interposed obstruction as a check from the hand of an enemy. Nor was it only in habits of thought these two resembled each other; they were singularly alike in face, and yet Mary was almost handsome. Her hair grew in the same way, springing up strongly from a low forehead; the well-marked eyebrows

spanned generously a pair of intelligent dark eyes; the nose was unremarkable; and the mouth, though wide, was finely modeled; and the charm of her smile was enhanced by even, white teeth. She was tall, and looked vigorous; wore her clothes well, and spent ten thousand a year in keeping her personal appointments abreast of the fashion. She seldom put intimate questions to her father except about what concerned her own affairs in reference to his, but she did now.

"How much do you give Billy a year?" she asked.

"Half what I give you," he answered. "Five thousand is plenty for him. Most boys get along on one—he's an ass."

She thought he was something worse but she didn't say so, because she had the protecting fondness for him inherent in the maternal temperament, and she was too generous to tell tales. Once more she offered advice—not so good as the first, but not without value in checking a downward career.

"Dad," she said, "pay Billy's debts, and cut him down one-half. It won't do any real good but it will give him an abiding sense of poverty that may be wholesome. I wish I knew what took him to Aix this summer—it certainly wasn't his health! But never mind—what's that letter from the Metropolitan Opera House?"

"Oh," he said, with cheerful relief in his voice, glad to turn away from further discussion of Billy's affairs, "that is one of the things I wanted to speak about. I applied for a parterre-box when you were so unhappy at being in the upper tier, and they have written to say they can give me one for Friday nights."

"Good old dad!" she said, patting his shoulder with a hand white and well kept, but almost as ill-shaped as his. "Do you know that this means a great deal to me?"

"I have always understood that music sounded better when heard through the chatter of smart people," he said sarcastically.

She attempted no defense of the smart people, but she gave him a

glimpse of the future by a fling at the past.

"When I first came to New York, three years ago, I used to think every one who wore pretty clothes and came to see me in their own carriage was smart, and I went out of my way to cultivate the very people who have blocked our road to success. I know better now."

He looked uneasy. It was always hard to find fault with her, but the speech displeased him.

"Hang it all!" he burst out. "My business friends are as good as I am—and better, too, for they have lived more civilized lives. If you grow a snob, Moll, you and I will fall out."

Miss Pitcher's fair-mindedness admitted the justice of the rebuke.

"It does sound snobbish," she agreed, "and yet it is simply the education of taste. Nobody blames a collector for weeding out his picture-gallery as his knowledge of art grows, or for throwing out poor books from his shelves to make room for better ones."

"Exactly," he agreed, removing his foot from the table. "There is the point. The pictures and books still please me. I'm afraid it is only the frames and the bindings you don't like."

"I don't like any part of them," she answered firmly. "We came East to make a purchase, and we haven't bought the best—we didn't know enough!"

Mary's attention was suddenly fixed upon something outside, and she nodded toward the window which opened on the deck.

"There go some people who illustrate my meaning," she said. "I don't know them, but I should like to. I admire their appearance, their low, well-trained voices, their courtesy to each other, their air of aloofness."

"More likely you happen to know they are Mrs. and Miss Chelsea, and the man with them is Lord Manxton. That was an easy guess!"

"I did not know their names," she answered, "but I happened to be near them last evening after dinner, and

everything they said and did attracted me—and made me feel common,” she added, half to herself.

“Good reason for liking people,” he sneered. “Guess you need exercise to shake some of the folly out of you. Come for a tramp.”

Her hat and fur coat were lying on a chair beside her. She stuck two or three hatpins carelessly through the crown of her hat in a way that betrayed skill rather than vanity in putting on her clothes, picked up her gloves, and let her father help her into the coat. The costume was admirably fitted to the occasion—nothing to flap—no loose ends—like the girl’s character it was replete with common sense.

The sea was by no means the conventional mill-pond; it was rough enough to make the *Leviathan*—almost the largest vessel afloat—give an occasional lurch; and the wind came in boisterous puffs.

The Pitchers began pacing the deck outside their own cabins, and as it happened to be the lee side they found their progress much impeded by groups of passengers in extended sea-chairs. In two of these were Mrs. and Miss Chelsea, well wrapped in furs, sharing the attentions of Lord Manxton who, seated in a camp-chair between them, was reading aloud from the last number of *Punch*, and all three were laughing.

Mrs. Chelsea, a woman of perhaps fifty, with a delicate high-bred face and gray hair, glanced at the tramping pair in mute protest; she hated people passing and repassing—it made her dizzy. Her daughter, a handsome blond girl, was too much absorbed in Lord Manxton’s reading to notice them at first.

Mr. Pitcher, who hadn’t got his sea-legs as yet, pursued a course he himself designated as “slantindicular,” and invariably lunged into the foot-rest of Mrs. Chelsea’s chair. As invariably he pulled off his hat and said:

“Beg pardon, ladies, Nep is a little restless to-day.”

By “Nep” he meant the rolling ocean and not his rolling self, and the classical apology was surely handsome enough to have won forgiveness; but when he

had done it for the fourth time Miss Chelsea appealed to the young man beside her in tones sufficiently low to escape being overheard and yet every word was so clear and liquid that it reached Mary’s hypersensitive ears and caused her extreme mortification.

“Can’t you pull mama’s chair a little out of the line of march, Manxton? I’m afraid Nep will land in her lap.”

Miss Pitcher flushed hotly. Only a few minutes before she had complimented her father on being a splendid old savage, setting his roughness above self-conscious refinements, but now she felt that refinement of any kind would be welcome. She couldn’t hear Lord Manxton’s reply, but she felt they were laughing, and when she looked back she saw “mama’s chair” was well out of the way. How intimate and congenial they seemed! It suddenly struck her that Miss Chelsea must be engaged to the young Englishman, for her manner of speaking to him was, to say the least, familiar.

After all, Mary was proving herself ill-fitted for the strife she pined to engage in, if so slight a rebuff as overhearing her father’s apology ridiculed could wound her. Oversensitiveness is not the panoply best fitted for storming the social fortress! She even felt so nettled that she hated to walk back past the group. If her father careened once more against them, she really couldn’t bear it. To put off their return she lingered at the forward end of the deck, calling her father’s attention to several sails dotting the horizon, and making him answer questions about the ship’s course, for which she didn’t care a button.

She had reason to regret her silly temporizing, for, while she was gazing across the sea, they were joined by a young person she had been avoiding ever since they came on board. The previous day the lady in question had made them feel in a vague way that they were objects of special interest to her; speaking of them to the people with whom she was playing bridge when they walked through the room, and passing Mary several times with a

most unnecessary apology for brushing against her.

She was aggravatingly pretty; aggravating because she hadn't a good feature in her face, which was heavy in outline and rather flat; but because her skin was dazzling—milk and roses—and her bronze hair curled saucily above her temples, and her little pug-nose stayed white, and her coarse lips showed teeth as even as a puppy's—she was pleasant to look at. She was dressed entirely in heliotrope—not the most aggressive shade, but sufficiently brilliant to make her an object of interest wherever she went; and round her neck was a deep collar of Russian sable that must have cost a pretty penny. She stamped her small, high-heeled feet on the deck, ostensibly to warm them, but in reality to attract the Pitchers from their seagazing; and when they turned she promptly addressed Mary.

"Your name is Miss Pitcher, isn't it?" she asked, smiling. "And that is your father? How do you do, Mr. Pitcher? I have often heard Billy speak of you."

Mr. Pitcher executed a curious movement, which seemed to offer his back to the wind, but in reality effected the planting of his muscular person between Billy's friend and Mary.

"My son has rather a wide circle of acquaintance," he said stiffly.

"Has he?" said Miss Curly-locks. "Then I must be the inside dot of the circle, for I fancy myself about his best friend. I've been abroad this summer taking a cure at Aix—and, by the way, Billy turned up there; swore he had rheumatism; and I'm on my way home now to join my mother. We are not rich, and she couldn't afford to go with me, but there is never any trouble in getting on by yourself if you've the least bit of sand. Why, my bridge-playing alone makes friends for me wherever I go."

"I dare say," said Mr. Pitcher, nervously edging away. "Mary, my dear, is it not rather windy here?"

Nobody understood better than Miss Pitcher the disadvantage of undesirable acquaintances, and she acquiesced in

her father's suggestion with a readiness that would have discouraged most strangers, but Billy's friend had a soul above a snub. She laid her hand on Mary's arm and forcibly detained her.

"Don't go for a moment," she said. "I came to ask you whether you sing or recite, or have any parlor tricks? We are trying to get up an entertainment for the poor woman in the steerage who had a baby last night, and whose husband is ill with pneumonia. The doctor says it's a pitiful case. I said I'd ask you."

Mary withdrew her sleeve.

"I can give you money," she said simply. "That is my only parlor trick."

"It's good enough for most people. I shouldn't mind being able to play it myself," commented Billy's friend, but she addressed her remarks to the back of Mary's head, for she and her father had already begun to move away.

As they came within sight of the Chelseas they saw the elder lady was preparing to go in. Her daughter and Lord Manxton unwound her, like a chrysalis, from her wraps, and, having set her upon her feet, they turned to pick up the rugs and cushions, while she, being of a nervous and impatient nature, fluttered on alone with steps so wavering and uncertain that Mary could hardly restrain herself from dashing ahead to her assistance.

About ten feet from the doorway an old gentleman was taking the air by the simple expedient of sitting bolt-upright in his chair. He wore a smashed-down hat and a pair of goggles, and his person was still further protected from the wind by a fur-lined coat, which reached up to his ears, and a fringed tartan that swept the floor like the draping of a catafalque.

It seemed a day when chairs had a peculiar affinity for human shins, and Mrs. Chelsea, who had made merry with her friends over the "Slantindicular course of Nep," was to suffer in a way that revenged Mary beyond her desires. The ship rolled, the lady swayed, tripped in the fringe of the old mummy's shawl, and then fell head-

long over his leg, which was crossed and thrust out like a hook to catch the unwary.

The Pitchers dashed forward to help her up, the old gentleman mumbled behind his paraphernalia that people ought to look where they were going; and poor Mrs. Chelsea in the very act of trying to apologize to the enraged bundle of clothes, suddenly cried: "Oh, my shoulder!" and fell fainting into Mr. Pitcher's arms.

The catastrophe was hidden from Miss Chelsea by groups of passengers, but Mary hurried back to tell her, while Mr. Pitcher, who never hesitated in coming to a decision—when Moll was not at hand—lifted the lady and carried her into Mary's private sitting-room, where he deposited her on the sofa, and then proceeded to deluge her with some tooth-wash, which he procured from the bathroom under the impression it was cologne. Perhaps the pungent odor of myrrh did just as well, for Mrs. Chelsea recovered consciousness as her daughter and Mary reached the cabin, and with a groan of pain declared she had dislocated her shoulder.

Lord Manxton was despatched to find her maid, Mr. Pitcher to get the surgeon, and then the two girls locked the door and freed the invalid from the waist of her dress.

"But why undress me in this lady's cabin?" asked Mrs. Chelsea feebly.

"Because it is lighter and more convenient than your own," Mary answered, "and because it would hurt you to be moved again, and because it gives me pleasure to put it at your service."

When Mary Pitcher wanted to be gracious she could be extremely winning, and the simplicity of her words carried a stamp of truth. Miss Chelsea, who seemed deeply attached to her mother, stooped and kissed her.

"Let us accept Miss Pitcher's kindness, mama," she begged. "At any rate, till after you have seen the surgeon."

And so it happened that an intimacy was established between the Pitchers and Chelseas in a way most agreeable to Mary's pride, for it put her in the position to confer benefits, and brought

out all that was best in her father's self-reliant character. He had the wisdom to give them very little of his company, even when the invalid was convalescent, but he supplied the sick-room with every luxury the steamer afforded, and his kindness was as real as Mary's.

Mrs. Chelsea was not allowed to move, and before they reached New York the girls had become Mary and Cecilia to each other, and Lord Manxton had discovered in Mr. Pitcher an originality that delighted him.

CHAPTER II.

Head-winds and rough seas protracted the voyage beyond the five days allowed by modern impatience, and before it was over Mary's devotion had brought her into the closest relations with the Chelseas; and whenever Cecilia was forced by her mother to go out for air and exercise, Mary took her place as a matter of course.

A recumbent position seems to open the heart, and Mrs. Chelsea found herself chatting as unreservedly to Mary as to Cecilia. If Mary didn't quite respond—not being horizontally placed!—it was from natural shyness, and not from any desire to conceal her thoughts and ambitions. One question she was most anxious to put to her invalid guest, but the time never presented itself when she could find an excuse to introduce such an intimate subject, and her curiosity seemed destined to go ungratified. She longed to ask whether Cecilia were engaged to Lord Manxton. They were always together; he came as a matter of course every afternoon to tea, and when Cecilia went out, he seemed to know by instinct the moment to expect her.

The last day but one the opportunity came. Mary came in with some hot-house grapes for Mrs. Chelsea, and gave such an enticing report of the sunshine and mildness of the air that Cecilia agreed to go out and surrender her charge. In five minutes she passed with Lord Manxton, and just beyond the window she paused to let him tie

her veil. He caught the flapping ends, knotted them dexterously at the back of her hat, and then half turned her round to get a front view of his handiwork. His face, usually grave, flashed one of its rare smiles, and they went on their way with an air of mutual understanding that was almost domestic.

Mary's heart contracted with an emotion she hardly understood. For five days she had seen a great deal of Lord Manxton, and had found him companionable and sympathetic beyond any one she had ever known, but never for a moment did she shut her eyes to the fact that he admired her friend. They formed a dual picture in her mind like a photograph of royalties, linked together in exalted companionship, and yet challenging individual admiration. They seemed the very complement to each other, supplying each what the other lacked. Manxton was grave and reserved, Cecilia bubbled over with vivacity. Manxton was tall and dark, with features a little too pronounced. Cecilia's blond loveliness was as delicate as a flower, and every passing emotion registered itself in her changing color; but with a more intimate knowledge of her character you felt that behind her suave adaptability lay a shrewdness and force little suspected by the outside world, while with Manxton, cold and proud as he seemed, there was an impulsive warm-heartedness that was always interfering with his calmer judgment. Impulse and judgment seemed for once in accord in his admiration for Miss Chelsea; whether as friend, fiancée, or wife she would reflect credit on any man's taste.

Mary was not the only person who watched the little pantomime with the veil. Mrs. Chelsea's eyes had been fixed upon the pair with the expression of complacent amusement mothers are apt to accord to the attractions of their daughters. As they passed beyond her angle of vision, she remarked to Mary:

"Poor Manxton! He has come into such an encumbered property that he holds that most wretched of positions—a peer without a pound. He inherited

from his cousin—a man not much older than himself, who was killed in the Boer war, but who lived long enough to make ducks and drakes of his money, to marry a concert-hall girl—who, fortunately, had no children—and to bring such discredit on the name that our Manxton will have hard work to live it down."

She said "our Manxton" with a tenderness that challenged comment.

"You are very fond of him?" Mary said, with a question note.

"He is my relation," Mrs. Chelsea answered. "He calls himself half an American, as indeed he is, for his mother was my first cousin, and he has inherited plenty of Yankee energy and courage. Instead of sitting down under his poverty, he is on his way now to go into business, and he thinks by living with absolute economy for a few years he may get his head above water. Gunkle, Sparing & Co. have offered him a position in their New York office; they have made him a junior partner, with a small interest in the yearly profits. It isn't much, but it seems dazzling to Manxton, and he thinks it is on account of his cleverness"—here she wagged her head in gentle derision—"but it's all his title."

Mary had a strange sensation of anger, but she managed to say indifferently:

"I should think Lord Manxton's intelligence was above the average."

Perhaps her voice was more earnest than she knew, for Mrs. Chelsea glanced at her before she answered.

"Oh, yes, he has the ordinary Englishman's horse sense, but he isn't sharp!"

"Thank God!" almost burst from Mary's lips, but she shut them tight, and Mrs. Chelsea resumed.

"Living nicely in New York is so expensive," she regretted. "A man like my cousin must have decent rooms, and to belong to clubs takes a quantity of money. I could perfectly well ask him to stop indefinitely with me, but I have to think of Cecilia. People are so censorious—I don't know what

wouldn't be said if I domesticated a fine young man in our small house."

"I should think the worst that could be said was that she was engaged to him," Mary ventured, and this time it was her turn to glance sharply at Mrs. Chelsea.

"Should you?" that lady returned. "That shows that you don't know New York—they might say she ought to be! In my judgment a young woman might do worse than marry Manxton, but Cecilia has a long head, and she has no patience with international marriages."

"I fancy Lord Manxton is doing his best to change her opinion," Mary said quickly, and then blushed furiously.

Mrs. Chelsea received the remark with thoughtful deliberation.

"I don't think he has asked her—how could he? What could they live on, except me? No, no; he admires Cissy in a cousinly way—well, let us admit, in an ardently *cousinish* way—but they have got too much sense to marry. All the same, he is a nice man, and will make a good husband to some woman who can afford him."

Her eyes said plainly: "Here is your chance, Mary Pitcher; if you want to buy my second cousin with your millions, neither Cecilia nor I will stand in your way."

Mary's pride took fire; she even felt superior to the lady whose breeding she had hitherto admired. She liked the Chelseas so much that she had forgotten the horrid money question that was always making her distrust the politeness of strangers, and now the hateful suggestion of barter had come between her and the secret of her heart. With the announcement of their relationship to Lord Manxton a little flutter of contentment had come into her mind; actions she had set down to love for Cecilia seemed understandable from another point of view; long conversations she had held with him assumed a little more importance; the fact that she was more attracted by him than by any man she had ever met didn't seem as humiliating as it had done half an hour before, and now everything was vulgarized by the intrusion of money!

No; not quite everything. Manxton was surely above such considerations; his whole course proved him a man of high character, of upright views. At the moment Mrs. Chelsea's companionship seemed unbearable; she wanted to be alone to readjust these new ideas, or, in plain language, to think about Lord Manxton as Cecilia's cousin and not her lover. Unable to sit still under the mental disquiet, she began moving about the cabin, till Mrs. Chelsea guessed it would be merciful to connive at her escape, and declared she felt sleepy. Possibly the elder lady felt a little ashamed of the gossip she had related, and was sincere in wishing to be left to herself.

Mary needed no second bidding, but, instead of going into the open air, she slipped some cards into her pocket and, making her way to a card-room on the upper deck, she spread out the double pack and was soon deep in the intricacies of "Miss Milligan." The soothing effects of *solitaire* upon agitated spirits are almost more remarkable than air and exercise; for with a semblance of application you can use the surface of your mind, leaving its deeper thoughts free, or you can bring your keenest faculties to the game, and triumph over anxiety by a patient exercise of skill.

Mary was making rather a poor exhibition of her cleverness, but no one was watching her; indeed, except for one table of devoted bridge-players, she had the room to herself; and she was just congratulating herself upon her choice of a retreat when Billy's friend, Miss Violet Hazzard, came briskly into the room, and took a chair by her side.

"May I watch your game?" asked Miss Hazzard.

Mary could have cried with annoyance, but she managed to say coldly:

"If you choose."

It was by no means the first time Miss Hazzard had forced herself upon her since the morning when she had announced herself as the intimate friend of the son of the house, and Mary felt more and more resentful at her effront-

ery. Moreover, the reputation of the young lady was, to say the least, puzzling to her fellow passengers. She was apparently well behaved in essentials, but while she professed poverty she played bridge for such sums as would have made most women hesitate, and when she lost she paid her gambling debts with a promptness and sangfroid that betokened plenty of ready money. Though she had asked to watch the game of solitaire, her shrewd gray-green eyes were fixed upon the frown above Mary's brows, and with a quizzical appreciation of what it meant, she burst into speech.

"Look here!" she began. "You don't like me a little bit, do you? You don't hanker much after my society, though I have tried to be as nice as I could to you. It's awfully short-sighted in you, Miss Pitcher, for I can do with Billy just about what I please, and, though I'm not in love with him at present, a little injudicious snubbing on your part might fan my friendship into quite a love-blaze."

Mary did not answer, and her tormentor continued:

"Just fancy my being engaged to Billy! Would you introduce me to all your new, grand friends? I think you would have to, but you would hate it, wouldn't you?"

All her little dog's teeth flashed maliciously.

"I should hate it excessively, Miss Hazzard," Mary said simply, turning her honest, dark eyes on the mocking face. "In the first place, Billy is a mere boy, and not a very steady one, and therefore he ought not to marry; and, in the second, it strikes me you would make him a most undesirable wife."

"You are outspoken, at any rate," the girl laughed, "but I shall not promise to give up the idea. A little bird has told me you are awfully 'on the make' yourself, and perhaps about the time you have climbed to the top of the social ladder you may hear from me, but I won't interfere with you now—it would be biting off my own nose! The more success you achieve the more useful you will be to a sister-in-law."

Mary threw her cards down with some temper.

"Miss Hazzard," she said firmly, "you seem determined to force disagreeable truths from me, and so I must tell you plainly that my brother has no independent fortune; he will be a very poor matrimonial investment if he happens to displease his father; and now as you have admitted that you do not care for him, and therefore we haven't even that bond in common, may I beg you to leave me in peace?"

As she spoke, a deck steward appeared at the door with a Marconi despatch held firmly by his thumb on a silver tray, and, glancing at the card-players, he called out in a singsong voice: "Miss Violet Hazzard."

"That's me, my man," said Miss Hazzard, with a fine contempt for grammar; and seizing the envelope she tore it open, and promptly burst into a laugh.

"From Billy," she declared. "He and mommer are going to meet me on the wharf, and we are all going to dine at Merry's. I shall have to face the custom-house officers in my best clothes. Great, ain't it?"

Mary paid absolutely no attention, but her hand that dealt the cards trembled, while Miss Hazzard continued:

"If you don't happen to run across Billy yourself when we land, I'll tell him you are all right, and that you have annexed awfully swell friends. Even a lord! So-long, my dear!" And she turned to go, but almost caromed against Lord Manxton, who had come in so quietly that he was already at the back of her chair, and could not have failed to hear her last speech.

"*Quand on parle du diable, on en voit la queue,*" she said, looking at him archly, "but I haven't seen as much as the end of your coat-tail for several days, Lord Manxton. Was our *petit souper* too much for you?"

"Perhaps I could tell you better if you spoke English," he said, with evident annoyance, at the same time holding the door open for her to pass out.

She paused to fire another shot.

"Oh! Miss Pitcher won't think any

the less of you for a dash into Bohemian life. Opera-singers are no worse off the stage than on. I dare say she has had a craze for Scampanari herself—most girls have—and she ought not to begrudge you Madame Zella's company at supper." And she nodded good-by.

Nothing could be more jocularly offensive than her manner. In one short speech she managed to hint at Manxton's desire to stand well with the heiress, at his Bohemian proclivities, and at her own intimate friendship with them both.

Mary's horror of Miss Hazzard had reached the point where to acknowledge a voluntary acquaintance with her was to proclaim a lack of moral rectitude, and she was just parting her lips to beg Manxton to disavow any intimacy with the young person, when he turned upon her with exactly the same reproach.

"How under Heaven should you know that woman?" he demanded. "She may be all very well in her own class of life, but I should think her class was the variety stage. I know you are overflowing with kindness; but, really, good nature can be carried too far."

"I" retorted Mary. "I good-natured to Miss Hazzard! Why, if dislike could kill, she would never have left the room alive. She will meet with no kindness at my hands; and, indeed, Lord Manxton, I only wish she were as innocuous to your sex as she is to mine."

Manxton stared haughtily.

"Do you mean me?" he asked. "I never addressed a word to her before in my life. I took supper with Scampanari the other night, for I've known him since his first opera season in London, and I couldn't very well refuse, but the rest of his party were strangers to me, even Madame Zella, whom I had the honor of sitting next to; and as for Miss Hazzard, she was quite at the other end of the table, and, except to wonder how one woman could make so much noise, I never even gave her a thought."

Mary smiled her nice honest smile, and said with a fervor that was a little too illuminating:

"I'm so glad."

And Manxton, catching the infection of her smile, answered boyishly:

"And I'm so glad you're glad—because it shows you like me a little bit. I wonder whether you would mind my saying I admire you so much that I could not bear to have you think ill of me."

Mary had forgotten to wipe two tears which had forced themselves from the depths of her mortification when Miss Hazzard had triumphed over her with Billy's Marconi, but now they seemed to dry of their own accord; and in a flush of happiness she even felt less vindictive toward their instigator. Hatefulness as her influence was over Billy, it was more endurable than a similar fascination over Manxton. Billy was a boy, a mere tyro in his knowledge of women—of course, he liked gaudy things, gaudy frocks, gaudy complexions, gaudy manners! But Manxton was a man of the world; if he could like such companionship, she could never have liked him again. But he didn't!

She gathered up her cards, murmuring some little platitudes about their understanding each other better in the future; and then Lord Manxton, whose broad shoulders were between her and the bridge-table, held out his hand, and when Mary put hers into it, he bent his head and touched it with his lips.

The action was deferential and romantic, and to Mary's ardent fancy almost a caress, so that every time she thought of it a little thrill of happiness started from the place his lips had pressed, and, tingling through her veins, made her heart glow in tender pride.

So absorbing was this new idea of Manxton as her own admirer instead of Cecilia's that she almost forgot the annoyance of Billy's Marconi till they were coming up the bay, and then it came upon her with sudden terror. If his father saw him, there might be a scene on the wharf, and Mary hated scenes. As usual, her energies were

directed toward protecting each from the other.

Fortune, however, smiled on Billy, and as far as Mr. Pitcher was concerned he escaped detection. It was the middle of the college term and the middle of the week, and work was rolling up against him in a way that rendered his continuing in his class more than doubtful, but he was not a person who borrowed trouble. When your best girl is coming up New York bay, you don't stop in a New England town to please a lot of musty old professors.

As they neared the wharf with its crowd of shouting, handkerchief-waving welcomers, Mary saw him lurking behind a gangway, and persuaded her father to come inside and sit with Mrs. Chelsea till the great rush of landing passengers should be over. And so Billy fondly imagined himself unobserved, and drove off with Miss Hazard after helping her pass her luggage and, incidentally, furnishing the cash to pay duties on several costumes, hats, and packages of gloves that the fair Violet admitted she had forgotten to declare.

Perhaps it was not only on Billy's account that Mary tried to put off the moment of leaving the ship; it meant leaving the Chelseas and Lord Manxton; it meant calling a halt in the happiest experience of her life, and she sat with her hand in Cecilia's, dreading the separation.

"We owe so much to you, dear Mary," Cecilia murmured, burying her cheek in Mary's muff, "but I don't think I am as grateful to you as I am simply fond of you. We must see each other every day."

And she was as good as her word, showing a desire for her company that pleased by its genuineness, and sharing friends and pleasures with both Mary and Mr. Pitcher with a simple good-will that marked her own appreciation and invited that of other people.

Any one who has ever tried to befriend "outsiders" in New York knows that all that can really be done is to give them the chance to help themselves. If they commend themselves,

the task is easy, but if they fall, socially, dead, you cannot galvanize them into fashionable existence any more than you can restore the sparkle to flat champagne. With Mary there were few difficulties; from the very first she became a favorite, and so it is fair to suppose that her rapid mounting of the ladder, upon whose first rung the Chelseas had placed her feet, was by virtue of her own tact and adaptability rather than any influence they exerted in her behalf. Of course, her money helped, but in a place like New York, where nearly every one in the gay world is rich, money is not as important in itself as in its effects.

From the time Mary landed things began to go her way. At first slowly, and then with quite a rush. Cards and invitations were piled upon her hall-table till she also began to pick and choose, to exclude and include in a way that seemed to her more reflective moments absolutely funny.

CHAPTER III.

There was evidently a dinner-party at the Pitchers', for a groom stood before their house busily opening the doors of the carriages arriving in rapid succession, and a carpet stretched from curb to sill. A Grand Central cab followed the last carriage, and out of it sprang a strongly made, high-shouldered young gentleman, with a fur-lined overcoat reaching to his heels. He could hardly be a guest, for the fur coat was unbuttoned so as to display a remarkable waistcoat worked in shades of violet, and, instead of the conventional white necktie, he wore a scarf to match his waistcoat, fastened with an enormous pearl and diamond pin.

In spite of his expensive outfit, he did not seem to have "the price of a cab" in his pockets, for, after searching through them in vain, he ordered the cabby to wait, and, followed by the groom carrying his trunk, he entered the house. Dashing past the footmen at the door, he accosted the butler—a dignified, gray-headed person—who

was apparently on his way to announce dinner.

"I say, Kingston," he demanded, "what's on to-night? Rather early for a dinner-party, I should think."

The man listened respectfully, but without a welcoming smile; he didn't fancy Mr. William Pitcher, Jr.

"A small dinner, sir, before the opera. I am just serving this minute."

The young gentleman nodded.

"All right," he said. "I sha'n't interfere with your table arrangements. Just let one of the men bring me up something to eat in the library, and a bottle of fizz, and, look here, pay my cab, will you? And let one of those fellows lay out my evening clothes."

By springing up-stairs like a mountain goat, he reached his bedroom before the company passed through the hall on their way to dinner, and fifteen minutes more saw him dressed for the evening, and waiting for his solitary meal in the library.

The room had taken on a certain elegance since he had last seen it, though to his taste it seemed severely plain, partly because there were fewer ornaments, and still more because the walls had been retinted in an unobtrusive shade, and the furniture recovered in a quiet, dark green.

Even he felt the air of the room restful—too restful, indeed; he wanted something to do, and he had read the evening papers in the train, and never wasted good time on books.

At last his roving eye spied, on Mary's writing-desk, a small diagram of the dinner-table, with the names of the guests written in their assigned places.

"Mrs. Manhattan," he murmured. "Great Scott! Moll is gettin' on! Miss Chelsea—Lord Manxton—Mr. and Mrs. van Tromp, Mr. Ernst von Schönberg. I wonder how pop likes such swell company, and, what's more to the point, how they like him! I bet my boots he still eats his peas out of a saucer with a spoon, and tucks his napkin under his chin." Here young Mr. Pitcher shook down the leg of his well-

cut trousers, and admired his flat foot trussed into shape by the best boot-maker in London.

Mary's success made him feel the deuce of a fellow! His dinner appearing at that moment, he made a ball of the diagram, and tossed it into the fire, dusted his fingers on his cobweb pocket-handkerchief, took the chair the man drew out for him, shot down his shirt-cuffs, squared his elbows, and curled the little finger of the hand that held his soup-spoon. If the footman were not impressed with his elegance, he couldn't know real fashion when he saw it!

Presently, when the man disappeared for fresh supplies, Billy drew a large lilac envelope from his inside pocket—thereby diffusing an odor of violets and musk—and, taking out the folded sheet, spread it beside him while he munched an olive. The handwriting was by no means worthy of the pretentious paper, with its grand cipher in silver, surmounted by a violet, but Billy cared little for the shaping of the letters as long as he could clearly grasp the meaning of the writer.

She seemed to make herself pretty clear, for she wrote:

DEAR BILLY BOY: You bet I care in what part of the house you get seats. I don't see why you can't make your sister give up her box to you for one night; but since you can't, I want chairs in the orchestra about half-way down, on the aisle.

Mama and I will be ready about half-past eight. I might as well tell you now that we are going to supper at Chalarákis' studio immediately after the opera; and I asked for an invitation for you, but I shall not take you unless you promise to behave like a gentleman. If you are going to sulk every time another man looks at me I had rather you didn't come along. So now you have got your orders and you can take your choice.

With love,

VIOLET.

Billy replaced the precious letter in its envelope as the servant returned with an entrée, but he left it ostentatiously lying beside his plate that the man might see it was from a lady.

His appetite was hardly satisfied when the clock struck eight, and, remembering how little the writer of the

letter enjoyed being kept waiting, he snatched a last forkful of terrapin, finished his champagne, pushed back his chair, and in his own picturesque language "got busy." There were a number of things to be done before he kept his appointment. First he telephoned to his father's club for an electric, to be charged to the old man—the reader will please supply quotation-marks—then he went boldly into Mary's bedroom, rummaged through a certain drawer in her dressing-table, abstracted a key which seemed to conform to his preconceived ideas, fitted it into a small iron safe near her bed, gave the handle a knowing twist and the door a jerk, and took what he wanted, which happened to be money. Several packages of crisp new bills lay cozily among her jewel-cases, and, counting out five hundred dollars in various denominations, he scrawled on a piece of paper: "I. O. U. \$500. Billy," slipped the acknowledgment of his appropriation into the place of the bank-notes, locked up the safe, and marched out.

The Pitcher omnibus was at the door as well as Mrs. Manhattan's carriage, but the guests had not yet come out, and Billy got into his electric and proceeded to the boarding-house which Mrs. and Miss Hazzard honored with their patronage, having stopped at a florist's on the way, and expended part of his new wealth in two bunches of violets as big as his hat.

The ladies were waiting for him in the parlor—a room furnished from various auctions, with here a gilt chair and there a satin one, while the walls were literally covered by a heterogeneous collection of chromos and gilt-framed mirrors, and the floor with a medallion carpet that could only have been manufactured for the saloon of a steamboat.

Miss Violet wore a diaphanous creation of pale lilac, embroidered in silver, and Mrs. Hazzard a pink satin, a good deal spotted and frayed—but then she had bought it for ten dollars from her daughter, who was in the act of letting it go for eight to an old clothes lady from Sixth Avenue; and they both con-

sidered the bargain a good one. In fact, they got on very comfortably together, for each knew what to expect from the other, and they were seldom disappointed.

Billy bustled in with lively apprehension, knowing himself at least ten minutes late, but to his great relief there were no reproaches—the violets more than making good the delay. Miss Hazzard pinned hers into her well-rounded corsage, and handing her cloak to Billy—who stole a kiss when the elder lady turned her back—she let him button it with infantile simplicity, and started for the door.

Arrived at the opera, Miss Hazzard had one of her characteristic inspirations that quite eclipsed all previous efforts to annoy Miss Pitcher. The curtain was down, the lights were up, every one's eyes and opera-glasses were directed upon their neighbors so that no manifestation of eccentricity could pass unnoticed. Miss Hazzard, in her grand ball-dress, led the party, preceded by an usher; next came Mrs. Hazzard, less magnificent and a good deal dirtier, carrying her own wrap—a shabby black velvet with a skunk collar—and lastly Billy, once more bearing his fair one's opera-cloak and walking with a swagger that would have befitted a director, to say the least. When they got on a line with Mary's box Miss Hazzard halted, gave a little shrill squeal of pleasure, and began throwing kisses to Miss Pitcher, while she pointed to Billy and indicated in pantomime that later she would send him up to the box.

From the time they left the ship to that moment Mary had lost sight of Miss Hazzard, and almost persuaded herself a disagreeable incident was closed forever. Billy also had been conducting himself with a discretion foreign to his previous history, and Mary's own affairs were prospering beyond her fondest expectations—in friendship, love, and ambition, all was most reassuring; it was therefore the irony of fate that this evening, which seemed to her a veritable social triumph, should be the time when once

more she should be given publicly into the hands of her enemy.

Mary's party occupied two boxes; her own and Mrs. Manhattan's, that adjoined it, and, though the great lady chose to sit with Miss Pitcher, to whom she had extended the aegis of her social protection, Mrs. van Tromp and Cecilia were next door.

When Miss Hazzard began her demonstrations, Mrs. Manhattan bent forward her diamond-encrusted person and took a long, steady stare. Mrs. van Tromp raised her eyebrows, and demanded an explanation from Cecilia, while Mr. Pitcher snorted like a grampus in the back of the box, and Mary bit her lips in silent misery.

"Do you know them, my dear?" asked Mrs. Manhattan.

And Mary, scorning subterfuges, said plainly:

"It is my brother, Mrs. Manhattan, and the younger of the two ladies with him crossed with us on the *Leviathan* in November."

"And a piece of confounded impudence it is for her to venture to recognize my daughter, and for Billy to escort her here," broke from Mr. Pitcher in rage and astonishment.

Mrs. Manhattan had supposed the ladies in question simply vulgar; she even rejected the idea that they belonged to a world which might be termed three-quarters respectable—where taste and manners are more decadent than morals—but the outburst of indignation from her host put quite another interpretation upon it, and made her feel personally outraged at having been subjected to such a scene.

It all came from condescending to parvenues, she told herself furiously, and yet she really liked and valued Mary—liked her better than any of the mob of well-born, well-bred young women who as débutantes had claimed her attention year after year. She hoped the dear girl was not going to prove impossible, particularly just now, when a brilliant future seemed opening out for her. Lord Manxton was evidently on the brink of proposing—

some people even said he was in love—but she began to doubt whether he could face the connection.

Fortunately we do not all wear our thoughts like phylacteries, and Mary, glancing at Mrs. Manhattan's impassive face and gracious way of greeting some fresh visitors to their box, came to the conclusion that she had overestimated the importance of the whole thing, and the sooner she forgot her discomfiture and listened to what Mr. von Schöenberg was telling her about the expense of producing a new opera, the sooner her spirits would recover their equilibrium. If only her father had been less outspoken, the incident would have lost half its terrors. What right had he to take the girl's character away like that!

She stole a furtive look at the back of the box, and was alarmed to see him—still looking like a thunder gust—extract a card from his pocket, scribble something on it with such energy that he broke the point of his pencil, and rush out of the door, jamming on his hat as he went.

In a minute or two an usher walked down the aisle and handed Billy the identical card, which Miss Hazzard deliberately read over his shoulder, and which caused her intense amusement. Billy didn't laugh, however; he half rose, hesitated, looked at his companion for advice, received from her a little shove, and finally sauntered slowly toward the back of the house, where retributive justice was waiting.

To tell the truth, Mr. Pitcher was in a towering passion; he had believed his son safe within the enfolding arms of his alma mater, and, having just paid his debts for the seventh time and received assurances of future rectitude, it did seem a little disappointing. It would have been bad enough to find him home without leave—a boy with so much neglected work to make up—but to see him publicly escorting Miss Violet Hazzard and her chaperon to the opera was past belief. As a matter of fact, the angry gentleman knew nothing definite to Miss Hazzard's disadvantage, but he distrusted her on the ship, and

her conduct that evening had deepened the bad impression. By dint of whispering "a couple of Jezebels" to himself again and again, he got to believe them such, and he only wished Billy were six years old and could get what he deserved.

Mary could only guess at what took place at the interview by the results. Her father did not return, and when Billy once more slid into his chair beside Miss Hazzard, he looked both pale and sullen.

Lord Manxton brought the elder Pitcher's apologies to Mrs. Manhattan for deserting the opera so early, explaining he was not feeling at all well, and had thought it wiser to go home, which was a free translation of his intentions, confided a moment before to his young English friend in the corridor.

"Look here!" he said, buttonholing him. "Just say to the old lady and Mary that I ain't feelin' good, and I mean to quit. I'm all riled up and mad through and through, and if you will see 'em home, I'll give you a tin medal and my blessing."

CHAPTER IV.

Manxton had watched Mary through the annoying scene of Miss Hazzard's public recognition with an admiration that closely resembled adoration. He delighted in the grave dignity with which she bowed to her brother and his friends, her courageous avowal of the relationship when Mrs. Manhattan's curiosity demanded an explanation, and later, when he brought her father's message, he was touched by her tender dread of a quarrel between those she loved. The world would be a kinder place with a heart like Mary Pitcher's to share it, he thought.

Before they left the opera-house, while they were waiting in the lobby for their omnibus, an extraordinary-looking man spoke to Mrs. Manhattan, bowed to Cecilia, and, passing behind them, touched Lord Manxton's arm, and said something in a low tone.

Though Mary could not hear what he said, the reply was distinct enough.

"Awfully sorry, my dear fellow, but now that I have got into harness, I have to keep early hours. I suppose it's my dull English wits, but I cannot sit up all night and have any brains for work the next day."

Though the refusal was cordial, it struck Mary that Manxton did not like the man, who was a heavily built creature of thirty-five, evidently a foreigner, with a protruding jaw and long, pointed ears. His expression was amiable, if self-satisfied, and his slim hands looked clever. He moved off murmuring something about "rather a jolly party, or at least it promised well," and Mary ventured to ask Mrs. Manhattan his name.

"It is Chalarákis, the sculptor," Mrs. Manhattan answered. "He is a Greek, and a charming man, with the most unexpected odds and ends of information, which he imparts in the most odd and unexpected way."

"He is awfully clever," Cecilia added. "Won't you take Mary and me to his studio some afternoon to see his 'Sappho,' dear Mrs. Manhattan? I hear it is exquisite."

Mr. von Schönberg, who was always at Cecilia's elbow, interposed.

"The Metropolitan has bought it, Miss Chelsea; you will see it there at much better advantage." And then as the groom signaled them to come, Mary heard him add:

"The man is a horrible bounder. He has managed to commend himself to Mrs. Manhattan by doing a wonderful bust of her husband; but I advise you not to go to his studio."

The tone of his voice was so assured, as if he knew his advice must carry weight, that Mary wondered whether her friend's dislike of international marriages was going to melt in the ardent devotion of this accomplished Prussian gentleman.

As Mary entered her own door, she was obliged to take Kingston into her confidence to the extent of admitting that her brother's visit was unexpected.

"Is Mr. William staying here or at

an hotel?" she asked the man, who always made a point of sitting up to open the door for her himself.

"Yes, ma'am," Kingston answered, and added the gratuitous information: "Mr. William arrived as I was announcing dinner, and left soon after height. He fetched a trunk."

"Let one of the men wait up for him, and ask him to go to my room the moment he comes in," she said, feeling that no sleep would be possible till she knew how matters stood between Billy and her father, and hoping against hope that the Hazzard incident might be less objectionable than it appeared.

Her maid unlaced her dress, brushed her hair, made up the fire, and disappeared, carrying the opera-cloak and dress over her arm, and Mary was alone. The pearls she had worn were still on her dressing-table, and, wishing to put them away, she opened a small drawer to get the safe-key, and discovered a degree of disorder that seemed unusual. Still, she had dressed hurriedly, and Julie might have forgotten to make things tidy, but the circumstance was sufficiently disturbing to rouse suspicion, and she unlocked her safe with hands a trifle unsteady.

It isn't pleasant at one o'clock at night to come upon suggestions of a burglary. It was an effort of will to open the door and examine the interior of the safe, and what she saw did not tend to reassure her. The jewel-cases were pushed aside, and the packages of money lay in the midst wherever they happened to fall. Mary took up the topmost envelope, and, as she drew out the diminished package of bills, Billy's I. O. U. dropped out. It was by no means the first time he had helped himself to her funds, but he had arrived so late and left the house so early that it never occurred to her he had found time to recoup his pockets at her expense.

As she sprang to her feet and crushed the acknowledgment of his theft—she was too angry to mince matters—in her hand, she looked so like her father when he rushed from the opera-box to confront Billy that it was

funny. If the good gentleman could have worn a blue silk peignoir and surmounted his head by a coronet of dark braids, the resemblance could hardly have been stronger.

By and by the anger melted, but it only gave place to contempt; a contempt for her brother's meanness, his incorrigible selfishness—and he had been such a dear little boy! Memories of the past came crowding upon her; times when no pleasure was complete unless she shared it, when no childish sorrow could be forgotten till poured into her sympathetic ear, when her two years of superior age made her feel the pride of motherhood in his fearless indifference to danger.

Anger and contempt both died away, and a tender pity came into her heart; after all, wasn't he only going through a period of folly common to all pleasure-loving boys with rich fathers?

She threw his I. O. U. into the fire, and, drawing her chair close to a lamp, she began reading a little volume of verse Manxton had sent her that day. Verse, indorsed by one's lover, always seems charged with personal application, and Mary was soon so absorbed that her brother's step outside her door came to her as a surprise, though it was past two o'clock. It was perfectly steady, and she was thankful that intoxication was not to be added to the misdemeanors of the evening, but when he was actually inside the room, she was not so sure of his sobriety, for his eyes looked glazed and heavy, and his under lip was thrust out like a pouting child's.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked sulkily, standing with his back to the fire and scowling down at her. "There has been jawing enough for one evening, I should think, without starting in again at two g. m.!"

What used to seem to Mary funny, boyish slang, now sounded insufferably coarse. His assumption that she meant to find fault was an admission of guilt, and his sullen manner antagonized her and held her newly awakened tenderness once more in abeyance.

"I want to say that I do not like

my private safe opened and money taken out without my permission. Suppose any of the servants had seen you going through my things like a sneak-thief, you would have run a good chance of having a bullet through your head. You behave like a blackguard, Billy."

He hardly looked at her, but thrust his hand into his trousers pocket and drew out a roll of bills, which he threw into her lap.

"There's your money," he growled. "I sha'n't need it now. I am going back to college to-morrow—or, rather, to-day," he corrected himself, glancing at the clock.

At this announcement of good intentions on the part of the prodigal, Mary's whole attitude changed from irritation to sisterly love.

"Are you, dear?" she exclaimed joyfully. "I am so glad, and father will be, too. Did you tell him? Keep the money, old boy—I can easily spare it."

"I don't want your money," he said crossly, "and, as for father, I don't care whether he is glad or sorry. You might as well ask a child who is burning to death to confess he is sorry he played with matches!"

She flew to his side and put her arms round his neck.

"You are in trouble, dear; tell me what it is," she pleaded. And when he shook his head, she added sadly: "But I know; it is that dreadful woman! You have found out at last what she is—and it hurts; but it is a good hurt. You will be glad by and by."

"Shut up, Moll!" he said, and, though the words were rough, the tone held more sorrow than anger.

Mary ventured to go on; her methods were crude, but so was the subject of them.

"Just ask yourself," she urged, touching his cheek with hers, "would you like to see *me* in her company."

"I shouldn't have liked to see you at that supper to-night," he snapped, and then shut his lips tight, as if he regretted the admission.

"Where was it?" she hazarded, hardly expecting an answer.

The reply burst from him, however, as if it were a relief to confide in some one, and perhaps, too, in spite of his disgust, he was not sorry to let her know what notorious company he kept.

"At that beast Chalarákis' studio."

As he spoke he pulled away a handkerchief which he had tucked between his waistcoat and shirt-front, and displayed a vivid red heart on the starched bosom.

"Humorous, isn't it?" he sneered. "Nice joke for a girl to play!"

"Why did you let her?" asked Mary.

"Let her!" he repeated. "There wasn't any question of letting. She was sitting by that pointed-eared ape, letting him leer at her, and I stood it as long as I could, and then I went over and told her I was going home, and she had to come, too, and every one began to laugh, and she got angry, and so did I, and I tried to pull out her chair. She screamed, and two or three men dragged me away and held me, and somebody called out: 'He's jealous—poor Bleeding-heart!' And Violet seized a piece of half-raw duck and dabbled it on my shirt-front, while all the others roared with laughter, and then they pushed me out of the room and locked the doors, and, by God, I'll kill her!" he sobbed, throwing himself on Mary's sofa.

She let him lie there for what seemed to her an interminable time, and when she went over to him, she found he had fallen into a sleep. Covering him with a blanket, she once more resumed her watch by the fire, and left him undisturbed till she heard the servants stirring about the house, and then she dismissed him to his own room.

Mortified vanity and jealousy had done what no amount of reasoning could have accomplished, and Mr. William Pitcher returned to his university a chastened and disillusioned man.

CHAPTER V.

Business was no sinecure to Manxton; he usually put his best into it. But the day after the opera his heart

played such havoc with his head that toward nightfall the vision of Mary's drawing-room, with its blazing wood-fire, the shining silver and delicate china of the tea-table, the shaded lamps, and Mary herself doing some bit of embroidery as she talked, was too compelling to be ignored, and, turning his back upon his office, he made his way through the crowd thronging the subway, took an express to Forty-second Street, and there returning to the pavement, resumed his journey north, this time on foot.

It was snowing, and, though he left most traces of it outside in the hall, some melted flakes still glistened in his dark hair, and his face had the brown-red color of a man who has battled his way through winter winds. He looked the hale, hearty, handsome English gentleman that he was. And it was a thousand pities that Mary should not have been seated in her customary chimney-corner to welcome him, for every time she saw him she discovered new perfections, and this afternoon they were rather more prominent than usual.

However, her chair was empty, though the embroidery, with its needle stuck in a flower, and thimble and scissors nestled in its fold, bore witness to her having been recently in possession. In every other respect his anticipations were fulfilled; the fire blazed gloriously, the tea-kettle sang, the muffins and buttered toast stood in covered dishes, which only allowed a pleasant whiff to reach his nostrils, and the lamps were just as he liked them—a little brighter than most women think becoming. Manxton liked light and space.

He stood warming his chilled hands over the blaze, enjoying the restful comfort of the scene, till suddenly he began to feel aggrieved at waiting, and was seriously contemplating ringing to find out whether his name had been given to Miss Pitcher, when the door opened and she came, gracious and capable, as usual, bringing with her an atmosphere of gentle control even over inanimate things; as handsome and

vigorous as he was himself, but for the first time since he had known her there were violet circles under her eyes, and her manner, though not unhappy, was grave.

"You are tired," he said, almost affectionately. "I am going to make the tea. I learned to be a cook as well as a nurse when I went out to South Africa to take care of poor Manxton before he died."

He sat down at the tea-table and accomplished his task with a sort of childish earnestness that seemed to Mary delightfully funny.

"I believe," she said, "that you English arrive at the gates of Paradise with your tea-baskets."

Though her words mocked, her smile was admiring; and he, leaving his tea to draw, crossed over and took the chair beside her.

"Now give an account of yourself," he demanded. "How does it happen that you are so submissive, and why do you look tired?"

"I didn't go to bed last night," she confessed. "But it doesn't matter, for things have come right to-day. You were with my father last evening when he was angry with Billy, so now will be glad to know they are reconciled, and my brother has gone back to college, determined to behave himself."

"Do you ever get tired of bearing other people's burdens?" he asked.

"It is a woman's lot," she answered. "I am always quoting St. Paul to myself: 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? Besides that which cometh upon me daily the care of all the churches.' For churches read household and you get a pocket edition of feminine life."

He laughed at her application of the text, made her a cup of tea with the same painstaking care he had shown in preparing it, and then pulling a cutting from a newspaper out of his pocket, he once more appealed to her.

"I'm going to add to your burdens by asking for sympathy; not that I'm unhappy, but I am angry—impotently, furiously angry."

Unfolding the paper, he held before her eyes in startling head-lines:

LADY MANXTON RETURNS TO THE STAGE!

The Young Dowager's Dancing as Discreetly Daring as Ever.

Mary looked puzzled for a moment. She had forgotten a Lady Manxton existed, and then recalling Mrs. Chelsea's account of the concert-hall lady, she exclaimed:

"Your cousin's widow!"

He shrugged his shoulders in disgust.

"Shouldn't you think," he said, "that having acquired a decent name she might be content to keep it decent? Heaven knows I value people for what they are, not for what their fathers were before them; and yet I cannot help feeling that an historic name is worthy of some respect. The first Baron Manxton was made at Agincourt."

He looked a very worthy descendant of the Agincourt baron.

"I suppose we hardly understand what these things mean to you," she said simply, "but I can imagine your resentment. I think the dancing dowager might have chosen a pseudonym out of respect to her husband."

"Then you do sympathize with me," he said gratefully. "You are romantic enough to appreciate my sentimental point of view. I'm not an ass—I don't think I'm a better man because my ancestor made a good charge at Agincourt, or a worse one because poor Manxton's widow chooses to print our name in red and yellow letters on her posters all over London, and yet I have been in a rage all day."

"After all," she said gently, "surprises cease to be surprises in a day or two. Lady Manxton's name and dancing will excite no remark after the first sense of incongruity has worn off. And as for you, a little patience and you will forget you ever were annoyed."

He came close to the back of her

chair, and, bending over her, said in a tone that set her heart throbbing:

"You are mistaken, Mary, dear, it must always be a vexation because I wanted to offer an unblemished name to you, and this makes me ashamed of it. Do you like me well enough to take it as it is? Sometimes I have hoped you did, and sometimes I have thought I was only an item in your general scheme of kindness. At any rate, this afternoon I suddenly felt that I could not bear the suspense, and so I came to ask you."

Mary was no actress. She turned with a glad surprise that was sufficient answer, and then, shrinking back in her chair, she whispered:

"Are you sure you want to marry me? You who value all the things I haven't got! Family and distinction and tradition—and I have only money!"

"And, except for your own comfort, I wish you hadn't any," he said earnestly. "I want all the world to know that ours is a marriage of affection. As for the other things you think I value, it doesn't matter how you have acquired distinction as long as you have it."

"I—distinguished," she said, shaking her head.

"For the simplest of reasons," he answered. "Your charm and nobility come from an understanding heart."

If Mary had had more of the quality called "proper pride," she might have delayed her answer in order to give her acceptance more weight; she might even have fancied that her lover took her consent too much for granted and have enjoyed keeping him, for a time, uncertain of his fate, but then such methods were foreign to her character. Simple truth had always been her only refuge, and it was not likely that she would employ finesse in a supreme moment like this.

And then Manxton told her all about his boyhood; how his father, being a younger son, had gone into diplomacy and married an American he met abroad—which proved the taste for American wives was deep in the family!—and how before the death of his parents he had lived first in one cap-

ital and then another; and then, as poor Charley Brabandt, with hardly enough money to educate him, he had gone first to Harvard and then to Cambridge; and after that came his unexpected succession to the title and his determination to work till he had freed the estate from debt and restored the place in Cambridgeshire, Manxton Abbey, to its former beauty. When all this was done they would end their days there in bucolic serenity, a model of conjugal happiness to the neighborhood.

Finally he wound up by declaring he hated people to whom he was attached to call him Manxton, and that Mary must call him Charley, which was an effort and made her blush. It would have been easier to call him Manxton, as the Chelseas did.

However, a new thought soon drove the color from her cheeks and made her sigh.

"There is only one sorry place in our happiness," she said. "My father will be miserable at giving me up."

Manxton began pacing the room in sudden disquiet.

"I never thought of him!" he exclaimed. "It is hard on him, and no mistake. You have been everything to him, and I am stealing you."

"You must be content to share me," she pleaded, but for the moment her suggestion met with no response.

To be frank, Mr. Pitcher was hardly the father-in-law a man like Manxton would choose as a housemate, nor yet be proud to exhibit among his own people as a product of American cultivation. He hoped Mary would not press the point.

If she guessed what was passing in his mind she ignored it, but she registered an inward vow never to desert her father and Billy—they were a sacred trust left her by her mother, and the husband who chose her had to accept them as well. All she said was:

"My father must be told. I wish love didn't get itself mixed up with duty."

He had just opened his lips to rally her about her cowardice when the door

opened and Mr. Pitcher came into the room with a step less buoyant than usual and a look of anxiety in his face. He gave a casual "How are you?" to Manxton, whose presence was too frequent to excite surprise; and sinking into the chair by Mary which her lover had just vacated he said querulously:

"I went to the train to see Billy off—he means to be a good boy, Moll—and I had the queerest attack I ever had in my life. I was going back through the station, and the floor went in waves like the sea, and I had to sit down in one of those hard seats and wait till things got sober. I didn't want to be run in for intoxication by some blue-coated busybody just because my head went round."

"Vertigo," she said quickly. "We must send for McTorture to look you over."

"More like apoplexy," he said grimly. "First call to dinner!" Like the dining-car porter on the Pennsylvania road, it gives three calls, Moll. When the last one comes I shall thank God I've taught you to take care of yourself—aye, and Billy, too. Guess I can trust my girl not to make a fool of herself, eh, Lord Manxton?"

A half-sheepish look—tender and a little self-conscious—flitted over the features of the young man as he answered:

"I am not sure but what you will think she has made a blessed fool of herself—she has promised to marry me."

"Pshaw!" burst from Mr. Pitcher in involuntary regret, but instantly aware of his incivility, he added: "My dear fellow, I mean nothing personal—I assure you I like you as well as another—better in fact—but I ain't ready to let Moll get married at all. She and I are sort of used to jogging on together, and I'm satisfied to let well enough alone."

Lord Manxton looked hurt.

"Do you really object, sir?" he asked. Mr. Pitcher forgot his dizziness and, sitting forward in his chair, he curved a large splay hand over each knee.

"I should have liked Moll to marry

an American," he said seriously, "though as I said before I mean no offense to you. I like you first-rate. I respect your sand, coming out here and getting to work, and I think you're a good sort. But I tell you these marriages where the women bring the money and the men give 'em a handle to their names don't work out like plain American love-matches. Perhaps you ain't brought up to think such a lot of women as we do, and perhaps we have them spoiled by overindulgence so that they're hard to get on with, but I should like to think Moll was going to be loved the way I loved her mother, and not treated the way your dukes and marquises treat their American wives. You ask whether I really object? Well, I shouldn't object to you if you had been born under the Stars and Stripes, but I can tell you most sensible men think twice before they give their daughters to foreigners."

Manxton flushed angrily, and then made a visible effort to repress his annoyance.

"Perhaps you think," he said, "that I might offer to live here permanently for the sake of proving my love for Mary, but that isn't my idea of the way a man ought to behave. If Mary marries me she takes me as I am, with my obligations to my own country and my own property. As far as I can I'll try to leave her free to carry out her ideas of duty to you, sir, to give you as much of her time and care as she can—and I promise her the love of an Englishman and an American rolled into one. What do you say, Mary?"

Mary met her lover's appeal with a smile of such trust her father saw the battle was lost. She came, however, to his side, and, perching on the arm of his chair, put her arm round his neck.

"Daddy, dear," she said, "you know I mean to marry Lord Manxton or I shouldn't have allowed him to speak to you; so why should you hurt his feelings and mine? It is all nonsense about nationality—there are just as bad American husbands as foreign ones, only they don't happen to point a moral. In your heart you admire and respect Manxton,

so you are not playing fair—give him your hand this minute and say: 'God bless you both!'"

She was half in fun, but her voice trembled, and Mr. Pitcher winked away a tear.

"All right," he acquiesced. "Give us your hand, Manxton, and God bless us all three and send that we may never regret this day's work! I think, myself, you'd be happier with some duke's daughter, but since nothing will suit you but my Moll, I suppose I might as well get used to it."

He got heavily out of his chair, and left the lovers alone.

CHAPTER VI.

Mary's marriage so quickly followed the announcement of her engagement that it took place before the end of the season; before the combination of Lent and March provoked an exodus of fashionable idlers from wind-swept New York to find fresh amusement under sunny skies. She was fortunate in her day, which was mild as April, though the calendar was still set for February.

The chantry of St. Jude's was in gala trim, garlanded and canopied in a way that would have announced a wedding to the passers-by, even if the papers had not been busy with every detail they could ferret out for weeks before. Poor Mary was not marrying the man who had won her heart—she was "forming an alliance"—she was joining the "galaxy of American peeresses"—she was "espousing the banker-baron whose ancestry dated back to Henry the Fifth and the field of Agincourt."

She wasn't doing any of these things—she was head over ears in love, and was trying in the least ostentatious way she could to join her lot to her lover's, but somehow the public got the best of her. The very choice of the chantry instead of the church was considered an evidence of exclusiveness instead of a modest shrinking from notoriety, a proof that both she and Lord Manxton felt their intimates were comparatively few and their happiness of small concern to the outside world.

Perhaps Mr. Pitcher was partly to blame, for though he yielded in regard to the ceremony being almost private he insisted upon its being followed by a reception that would satisfy the inclinations of his hospitable heart.

Von Schönberg was Manxton's best man, but Billy was summoned from college to perform the part of usher and, in company with two or three other young gentlemen in frock coats, white neckties, and bridal gardenias, he received and seated the company with all the dignity befitting the son of the house.

The chantry was packed to its utmost capacity, the bride's carriage was in sight, and the organist about to glide from a medley of charming selections into the Lohengrin wedding-chorus, when a cab stopped so abruptly at the awning entrance that the Pitchers' coachman had to pull up short to avoid smashing the back panel of the humbler vehicle with his pole. The horses tossed their bridal rosettes, the coachman and footman scowled their indignation, and Mr. Pitcher, seated in state beside the bride, stuck his head out of the window and remarked to a policeman who was trying to keep back the crowd that when he paid fifty dollars for extra officers to keep order he "didn't expect no hitch."

He got one, whether he expected it or not.

Out of the cab stepped Miss Violet Hazzard, as usual dressed in her name-color. A large hat of violets and nodding plumes crowned her curly locks, a dress of the most delicate shade of her favorite color was completed by slippers and stockings of the same tint, and to give a cachet of sanctity to the whole, a Church Service, bound in lilac leather, was held ostentatiously in her hand.

It took Mr. Pitcher quite half a minute to convince himself that it was really Miss Hazzard, and then he lost all control of himself.

"Don't let her in!" he roared from the bride's carriage. "She ain't invited! I tell you, she ain't invited!"

But Mary laid her hand on his arm

and begged him to be silent. "Do not let us make a scene that will be reported in all the papers," she said miserably, shrinking back in the carriage till the uninvited guest should get inside the chantry.

It happened that the ushers were already at the door when Miss Hazzard's cab headed off the bride, and Billy, being slightly near-sighted and full of pompous zeal, dashed forward to receive the strange lady and conduct her to a seat before the procession formed, so that when the perfidious Violet hooked herself on to his arm, the shock was so paralyzing that he almost shook her off. The young lady, however, was quite equal to the emergency, for she clung to him with affectionate tenacity while she whispered:

"It seems an age since I have seen you, Billy boy. Do be a darling and give me a good seat right up at the top."

She displayed an invitation with her name plainly written—over somebody else's, erased—was passed unchallenged by the man at the door, and swept Billy along with her to the top of the chapel, where, finding no seat unoccupied, she took her stand by the steps of the chancel quite as if she were the one and only bridesmaid.

She looked so delightfully pretty and good-tempered and she murmured such loving words into his ear as they rushed up the aisle, that his anger melted like hoarfrost and the old intoxication came upon him like a frenzy. He hated to leave her to go back to the door to receive the bride; he told himself there wasn't a woman there who had half her looks, in spite of their haughty ways; and as for clothes, she was just queen of the show!

In the meanwhile Manxton and his best man had been announced from the vestry-room, and, coming into the contracted space that separated the front seats from the steps of the chancel, they almost fell over Miss Hazzard, who stood quite unabashed before the whole assemblage, her gorgeous costume turning from iris shades to crimson in the sunlight from the tinted windows.

Manxton, nervous and intent only on keeping his tryst to the second, squeezed past her with little ceremony, hardly glancing at her face, while she, not knowing that Von Schönberg was following, turned half round to watch the approach of the bride, balancing herself on an outstretched foot. Von Schönberg, never a graceful man, came plodding after the groom quite unprepared for this additional blocking of the way, and having first stumbled over her foot he made a false step in recovering himself, and brought his heel, with his two hundred pounds of solid Teutonic avoirdupois, on the toe of her beaded slipper. The agony was so great that a deadly faintness crept over her, and, fearing she might fall if she tried to maintain her upright position, she made a dash for the vestry-room, barely escaping a collision with the officiating clergyman, who was just letting himself in behind the altar-rails.

And so, after all, Mary was married without the baleful presence of Miss Hazzard, married in the seven minutes it takes to tie the irrevocable knot, while her tormentor, who had really meant to have posed as bridesmaid, sat rocking herself with pain on a hard wooden chair in the vestry.

With the exception of this slight contretemps, which, after all, had but little significance to most of the guests, the wedding passed off without anything to differentiate it from all the other weddings of the season. Mr. Pitcher forgot his anger against Billy in the delights of hospitality, in plying his friends with meat and drink and stuffing their pockets with wedding-cake. In some way Billy managed to assure his father that he really had not been instrumental in Miss Hazzard's invasion, and he went back to college with a check for ten thousand dollars.

What he failed to tell was that, while innocent of Miss Hazzard's determination to go to the wedding, he was not so oblivious of her movements afterward, and during the few days he remained in New York after Mary had started on her wedding-journey, he almost took up his residence at the board-

ing-house she patronized with her "mommer."

The newly married couple went on a short trip to several points of interest within a short radius of New York in order to show Manxton the country of his adoption. They took in Washington and West Virginia and Niagara, and then made a rapid dash into Canada, and were home within three weeks; back at Mr. Pitcher's house, for he had made such a piteous appeal to Manxton not to take Mary from him that there seemed nothing to do but to make his home theirs.

Mary and Manxton returned from their wedding-journey, to find their place among the high-thinkers and the hard-workers of New York's most exclusive circle; the people, who, too intelligent to be satisfied with mere pleasure, have found their interest in the world's work—whether political, literary, altruistic, sociological, musical, dramatic, it matters little, so long as it is real—and Mary saw with pride that everywhere her husband held his own. A man of wide reading and large views, modest about his own attainments and enthusiastic about the achievements of others, no wonder she felt proud of her choice.

Mrs. Chelsea was her safety-valve in these honeymoon days. She could go to her and talk Manxton, and again Manxton, and always find a sympathetic ear and an admiring tongue to echo her praise; and so with this relief for her pent-up worship, she was able to do violence to her inclinations. She could carry on a conversation at her own end of the table when she was dying to listen to what her husband was saying, she could even yield a few hours of his society to his club, and she only regretted that as a foreigner he could take no part in politics.

Cecilia bore with her like a saint, but at last her merry soul turned bitter.

"Mary," she said, "if Manxton is this monster of perfection, I wish he would go back to England and take you and mama along with him. You are an awful warning to every one not to marry!

Only one short month ago you were a sensible woman, and now, encouraged by my mother, you are a driveling idiot. All the same, I love you," she added, leaving them to discuss their hero.

Mary's revenge came sooner than she could have hoped. She had not seen Cecilia all day—rather an unusual omission, for they were sincerely attached—but they met in the evening at a dinner Mrs. Manhattan gave to the Thuringian ambassador and his wife. It was a large dinner and a distinctly formal one, and it was not till the ladies were having their coffee in the drawing-room that Cecilia managed to claim Mary's attention.

"Mary," she said, "you who are so in love with matrimony, give me your advice! Before I came here this evening Ernst von Schönberg spent an hour trying to persuade me that I should be happy as his wife, and finally I said I should leave it to you. I am very prosaic, you know, very cool-headed; I haven't illusions."

Mary's expression was both puzzled and a little pained.

"Dear Cecilia," she said, "unless you care so much for Von Schönberg that you can't live without him you ought not to think of marrying. The mere fact that you leave such a question to me answers itself. You are not in love."

Cecilia made a little grimace.

"That isn't at all what I expected a happy bride to say," she laughed. "Your rôle should be to protest that no one could be happy until they married, and I am pretending to myself that you did say so; for I really mean to take him, my dear, and, what is more, I mean to be just as happy in my matter-of-fact way as you are with all your romance."

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Pitcher was shrewd enough to recognize his son-in-law's business ability, and insisted that some of Mary's money should be put into the firm of

Gunkle, Sparing & Co. Manxton ought to have a stake in the concern, he declared. And while the younger man was not anxious to increase his obligations to his father-in-law, he realized that to refuse was to wound his wife; and so, shortly after his return from his wedding-trip, he found that his small interest in the partnership had suddenly become a large one, and his position, from being primarily ornamental, had become one of responsibility and weight. Mr. Pitcher's large money transactions were put in Manxton's hands, and so good was the younger man's advice, and so true his business instincts, that before the spring came he had made up to the old gentleman all he cost him.

In May a fresh honor came. Manxton was chosen to represent his firm in a syndicate of London bankers to meet in that city almost immediately to consider a foreign loan of some significance. Mr. Pitcher, while he knew none of the secret details of the affair, was—in his own language—tickled to death. It set him guessing how many things were open to self-congratulation. He guessed his Moll hadn't drawn no blank in the matrimonial market, if she did get a handle tied to her name—negatives abounded in the guessing process. He guessed Manxton wasn't sorry he had a father-in-law who knew beans! He guessed those Gunkle fellows know which side their bread was buttered—and butter wasn't yellower than the gold that came out of the Pitcher mine. Finally he guessed that if Mary and Manxton were going to England he'd go along and set 'em up in style, so he would, and let 'em have the time of their lives.

The day of departure had almost arrived, and Mary's preparations were nearly completed when the unexpected stepped in with its usual disregard of human arrangements and turned the orderly sequence of events into chaotic disorder.

Five days only remained before sailing, and Mary, tired mentally with the hundred and one details that accompany any family flitting, had been glad

to find rest and refreshment in the society of Mrs. Chelsea, Cecilia, and Von Schönberg, who had dined with her that evening. By eleven o'clock every one had gone, and even Manxton had taken advantage of the early hour to stroll down to his club with Von Schönberg. Mr. Pitcher, whose habits always drove him into working like a galley-slave when any change was imminent, hardly waited to see Cecilia follow her mother out of the hall door before he dashed to bed, and Mary, after casting a housewifely eye over the half-dismantled drawing-room and collecting a few treasured bibelots to lock up in her own safe, was mounting the stairs when the telephone rang in the insistent way that marks a long-distance communication.

The household was more or less disorganized, and even Kingston's punctilious service had yielded to a craving for a cigar in the back yard, so by the time he was found, helped into his coat, and despatched up-stairs, not only was the person at the far end of the wire out of all patience, but Lady Manxton was coming into the pantry to attend to the instrument herself. However, Kingston was just in time to save her the trouble and receive the message, while she stood leaning against the baize-covered door, wondering who wanted them at that time of night.

"Stop a moment," she heard him say. "Lady Manxton is here herself." And as he put the receiver into her hand he added: "Mr. William is very ill, my lady; it is the doctor telephoning; he intends to hoperate at once for appendicitis."

Mary called in vain; the instrument at the other end was shut off; and although Kingston gave her Billy's address, she could hardly believe it correct, for instead of being at Cambridge, it was in a well-known street in Boston. After wasting ten minutes of valuable time in trying to get the Boston central to help her locate the doctor who had telephoned her, she gave it up, and, leaving Kingston to call up Lord Manxton at his club and make the necessary arrangements for their journey, she

went herself to rouse her father, and then hurriedly prepared to catch the midnight train.

Mary and Mr. Pitcher were already in their places when Manxton joined them, and the comfort of his presence was very great, for what with the fatigue of the day and the uncertainty of Billy's condition Mr. Pitcher was completely unstrung, and seemed quite despairing of finding his son alive. It did no good to tell him that physicians no longer looked upon the disease with any special dread; he only shook his head and said it was evident his poor boy had put off the operation too long, or he would have been able to telephone himself, and not have left the terrible announcement to strangers. The more Mr. Pitcher thought about his son the more dotingly fond he became until he regretted the few restraints he had tried to enforce, and magnified his few virtues into the characteristics of an angel.

The sun was well up as they approached Boston, lending an air of gaiety to the dignified, prosperous suburbs, and shining with reverential fervor on the tower of Memorial Hall, seen now and again above the roofs and spires as if the very light of heaven reached the center of the Hub through its memories.

Billy's family knew their destination only as a number in a street, but whether that represented a hospital or sanitarium or private house they were in ignorance. The drive proved a short one; along Commonwealth Avenue, with its double roadway and intervening strip of park; through Trinity Square, and then into a cross street, where their carriage stopped before an apartment-house, substantially built and yet dingy.

Mr. Pitcher's impatience was once more at boiling-point; he dragged Mary in after him, leaving Manxton to settle with the spectacled cabman, and, brushing past a grinning, welcoming porter, he hurried to the desk. It is a safe guess in apartment-houses that where the porter is kind the clerk will be haughty, and this one was not only

proud but stone-deaf till he was ready to listen. He never raised his eyes from the ledger in which he was writing when Mr. Pitcher addressed him, and it was only when the irate visitor banged with an umbrella on the desk that he drawled:

"Whom do you wish to see?"

"Mr. William Pitcher junior. Great Scott! Get a move on you, man, or he'll be dead while you are keeping me waiting!" roared Mr. Pitcher.

The clerk shook his head indulgently.

"Quite impossible, sir," he objected. "Mr. William Pitcher is seriously ill, and we have orders that he is not to be disturbed."

"I tell you I'm his father," said the poor gentleman, nearly jumping up and down in impotent fury.

Manxton joined them at this juncture, and, taking a card from his pocket, added his wife's name and Mr. Pitcher's, and desired, with his air of calm authority, that their arrival should at once be announced to whoever was in charge. Perhaps it was the title that overawed the clerk quite as much as Lord Manxton's manner, but the important fact was that he yielded far enough to telephone their names to the upper regions.

There was a slight delay, and then, bland and urbane, the great man advanced to the front of his desk.

"Mrs. Pitcher will see you at once. Take the elevator, if you please."

Mr. Pitcher gave a snort of surprise, Mary gasped, Lord Manxton looked puzzled.

"He means the nurse," said Mary gently.

"He's talking wild!" said Mr. Pitcher.

"Stay in the elevator, Mary, till I find out what he does mean," said Lord Manxton, as they rose slowly to the fourth floor.

But there was no chance to remain hidden, for as the elevator's gate slid back the door of the apartment facing it across a strip of parquet was thrown open, and a pretty genre picture dis-

closed. A trim waitress in a lilac cotton frock, frilled apron, and beribboned cap held the door wide, and on the threshold stood Violet Hazzard, fresh as the morning in a peignoir of white muslin and lace, with a bunch of violets pinned at her breast and lilac ribbons fluttering in the current of air made by the elevator-shaft. She put a finger of her left hand to her lips to enjoin silence, and thereby flaunted a great diamond solitaire and a plain gold ring below it.

"Please speak low," she said, motioning them into the dining-room which was nearest at hand. "My husband is very ill, but we think he is going to pull through. Have you breakfasted—Mary?"

Before Lady Manxton could answer Mr. Pitcher pushed past her, and, standing over the fair Violet like an angry giant, he asked in a voice that shook with emotion:

"Who do you mean by your husband?"

"This is mere bluster, Mr. Pitcher," she said, with some dignity. "You know and my sister-in-law knows that Billy and I have cared for each other for ages, but you and she showed yourselves so unfriendly that we decided to take the matter into our own hands, and Doctor Priestley married us three weeks ago. Of course your generosity to Billy was what made it possible for us to take this apartment. Isn't it a blessing we did, in view of this illness?"

The blow she dealt was so swift, so unexpected, so malicious in naming his gift to Billy as the means to the end, that all words failed him. Usually rich in expletives, not a sound escaped his lips. He crossed the room, flung himself into a chair at the foot of the table, and sat supporting his head on his hands in mute misery.

Manxton gave a less tragic turn to things. He asked a few questions about Billy, when he was taken ill, who had operated, how many days must elapse before he could be definitely pronounced convalescent, and then, having obtained Mrs. Pitcher's promise to telephone the

next bulletin the doctor gave out to their hotel, he swept the party off to breakfast.

They postponed their sailing and waited the outcome of the operation with what patience they could, but Mr. Pitcher could not forgive the secret marriage. He had trusted Billy once too often—he would never trust him again; he wouldn't even see him. Nevertheless, he went twenty times a day to the apartment-house to inquire, and remained behind in Boston for a day or two when the Manxtons left.

Mary saw her brother before she left, and found him so pathetic in his weakness and so desperately in love that it awoke a sympathetic chord in her heart, and she promised to do her best to reconcile him to his father.

"Violet's a stunner, isn't she?" His feeble voice faltered while he watched his wife's trim figure disappearing through the door. "You know I was mistaken about her being in love with that brute Chalarákis—she thinks him an awful beast, and she swears never to speak to him again. You will be kind to her, won't you, Moll?"

Mary would not commit herself to any intimacy with young Mrs. Pitcher, and said so firmly, but she promised to use her influence with her father to secure a settled income for Billy, large enough to meet his new expenses; and true to her word she made the suggestion that very day.

"Not a stiver!" Mr. Pitcher answered, drawing in his lips. "I'll pay his doctor's bill and their railway-fare out to the mine. Let him work for her, damn it! It won't do 'em a bit of harm to live on love."

Perhaps nobody can be angry for a long time without suffering in health for the perturbation of the spirit, without inviting an attack of what our ancestors would have called the spleen; and so, during the week he waited for Billy to be pronounced out of danger, and subsequently on the voyage to England, Mr. Pitcher had such frequent attacks of vertigo that it was decided to send him to Carlsbad to take the cure. Kingston went with him, and the poor

gentleman was so frightened about himself he made no objection.

He stopped long enough in London, however, to feel sure that Moll was suitably housed; that her carriages were not outdone by any of those dukes—it was a title that seemed to arouse his keenest animosity—that her window-boxes flaunted scarlet against the sober gray of her stone house; that an automobile was ready to whirl her into the country when she tired of the pavement; that her opera-box was well situated.

All these points being arranged to his fancy, he took a melancholy leave of her, and when he reached his destination put himself without reserve into the hands of the celebrated specialist he had been consigned to, with the childlike belief that obedience must bring its reward.

CHAPTER VIII.

With Mr. Pitcher's departure a calm settled upon the house in Carleton House Terrace. Not but what Mary was genuinely distressed at the condition of her father's health, and grateful for his lavish efforts to make her comfortable, but to be quite alone with her husband was like a renewal of their honeymoon and brought back the enchantment of those days. This was the reason she gave herself for being willing to send her invalid off with Kingston, but perhaps the eccentricities of his opinions and language distressed her more in London, where Manxton's family were presumably sitting in judgment on the marriage, than at home where millionaires of his type were thick as thieves.

At all events he had gone, and now that there was no divided duty the test of everything was Manxton's approval.

It was necessary for Manxton to be in England, so they had come; it was necessary for Manxton to entertain his colleagues, the house was ordered for that purpose; it was Manxton's wish that she should cultivate his family—she did so with the utmost sweetness,

finding them cold, reserved, and slightly patronizing. Though many of them were people of high rank, the person they saw the most of was by no means fashionable, though of vast importance in banking circles. This was old Sir Thomas Harcourt, a widower, Manxton's uncle by marriage, and the head of the London firm which Gunkle, Sparing & Co. represented in America. The old baronet was a keen financier and had been made chairman of the syndicate, and so business as well as family affection necessitated the intimacy.

Mary devoted herself to the two Miss Harcourts; large-toothed, sandy-haired ladies approaching thirty, primly careful of reputations never endangered, and very censorious as to the behavior of some of their relations whom they called fast, and others called smart. Sir Thomas was enormously rich, but kept them on the smallest allowance of pin-money, and never brought his horses to London. Mary lent them her carriage continually, supplied them with theater tickets, and made them welcome to lunch whenever they chose to come. They spoke of her as an American their cousin had married, and took all she gave them.

Another person she was occasionally thrown with was Mrs. Charles Mountcharles, a second cousin of her husband's, and a little lady who represented the most exclusive element of the set the Misses Harcourt called fast. She seemed disposed to be friendly, but never raised a finger to make Mary's stay in London agreeable. She also took all she could get, and was scarcely at the pains to introduce any of her admirers when they visited her in the Manxtons' opera-box, or any of the smart ladies assembled in her drawing-room when Mary happened in for a cup of tea at her tiny house in Park Lane.

The fact was patent that national prejudices were not to be bridged over in a few weeks, and that to these high and mighty ladies Mary was merely one of the many American peeresses overrunning the land; middle class by birth

—according to English views—and only tolerated for their money.

It was through the American ambassador that the open-sesame came. She and Mary were attracted to each other from the first and, being both women of keen perceptions and large hearts, their casual acquaintance rapidly grew into friendship. The American embassy was a house much frequented by all the diplomatic corps and by the most important and agreeable people in London, and there, feeling happy and at her ease, Mary was seen and admired, and invitations began to pour in upon her.

By the end of May she and Manxton were in the very vortex of the London season, and instead of renewing their honeymoon they could count the minutes they spent in each other's society.

Of course this was largely owing to Lord Manxton's business, which absorbed his morning hours that might otherwise have been devoted to his wife.

Indeed, things went from bad to worse, for just as the arrangements for the loan were approaching completion Sir Thomas Harcourt fell down the terrace steps at his country seat, Chittering Gorset, where he had gone to spend Sunday, and having broken his leg in two places he had either to give up attending the meetings of the syndicate, or they had to hold their final conferences at his bedside. They decided upon the latter course, and Manxton was continually rushing down for the night into Kent, leaving Mary to make her own parties for the opera, or to keep by herself engagements she could enjoy only in his society.

To be sure, he regretted the state of things as much as she did, but it is not in the heart of man to let love overrule ambition, and perhaps Manxton took the situation rather too casually.

She thought that sometimes she might have been included in these invitations, especially considering her politeness to the Misses Jane and Arabella Harcourt, but Mrs. Mountcharles laughed at her.

"They don't want attractive American women down there, spoiling their chances with financial bachelors; it is as much as Jane and Arabella can bear to have Victoria Mowbray in the house."

"Who is Victoria Mowbray?" asked Mary.

Her companion's mocking lips drew themselves into a Pucklike smile.

"Isn't Manxton a gay deceiver?" she exclaimed. "Do you mean to tell me he never mentioned Victoria to you? I can assure you there are those who thought she was going to be Victoria Manxton."

"But since she wasn't, would you mind telling me who she is?" Mary again asked, trying to make her tone playful and feeling suddenly irritated at everybody.

"She is a young widow, Sir Thomas' youngest daughter, and, for a Harcourt, quite a beauty. You can imagine the family face idealized—the same red hair, but the features cut down to normal size and the teeth hardly prominent at all. She shocked her father by becoming horsey and marrying Ralph Mowbray—a nobody who hunted himself into county society—and when he was killed two years ago by his horse falling with him, Victoria refused to live with Jane and Arabella, and so she spends the winters at Pau and the London season, when they are in town, at Chittering Gorset."

"I should like to see her," said Mary, a trifle disingenuously.

"I have no doubt that Manxton will oblige you," Mrs. Mountcharles answered, with a grin, and for the rest of the day there was for Mary a sense of discomfort, a curiosity that burned, a realization that while she might possess the Manxton of to-day and to-morrow there was a past in which she had no part.

They had given "Lohengrin" at the opera the night before, and *Elsa's* fatal insistence came to her mind. No, she would never tease her husband with questions; his past was his own except that it had helped nature make him

into the perfect man he was. Still she wished the perfect man could stay at home a little more.

Mrs. Mountcharles had come to pass judgment on Mary's presentation finery, just arrived from Paris and destined to be worn that evening at the last drawing-room of the season. She heard it was likely to be a long and weary affair, but then Manxton wished her to go to court, so there was nothing more to be said.

Mrs. Mountcharles examined the exquisite lace and embroidery of the dress, the veil and feathers, the jewels Mary had selected, and expressed a moderate approval.

"Who presents you?" Mrs. Mountcharles asked.

Now this question of presentation had been a mooted point between Manxton and his wife, she wishing the American ambassador to do it for her, and arguing that as the diplomatic corps had the entrée and were received first, it would be a great saving of time and fatigue, and he rather insisting that she should accept the offer of the old Marchioness of Hartingham—his great-aunt—who loved an excuse to go to court herself, though she was over seventy-five, and thought nothing of coming up from Devonshire for the purpose. Of course Manxton's wishes prevailed, and as Mary had yielded against her better judgment it was provoking to have Mrs. Mountcharles go off in a fit of giggles when the old lady's name was mentioned.

"You'll hear some home truths," she laughed. "Lady Hartingham is as mad as a March hare and doesn't fancy Americans."

It was not so much the hearing of home truths Mary was to find offensive as the sudden intrusion of Mrs. Mowbray into her life, for Mrs. Mountcharles had hardly left the house before Manxton telephoned from his place of business that his cousin, Mrs. Mowbray, had just come up to town from Chittering Gorset and he wanted her asked to dinner. He added that a note sent to the Harcourts would find her.

It happened that Mary's dinner-party

was complete. With the exception of Manxton, who had been presented upon his succession to the title and did not wish to go again to court, her guests were made up of people going on, like herself, to the drawing-room immediately after dinner; and Mrs. Mowbray would find herself deserted save by the master of the house. However, the note was written, an extra man or two secured, and then the next incursion took place.

Old Lady Hartingham arrived an hour late for lunch, with a maid, two trunks, and her best wig in a band-box.

"Never mind about lunch," she said airily. "A cup of bouillon, a few slices of cold fowl, and something tasty with my salad will do very well, sent on a tray to my room. I did mean to lunch at Thomas Harcourt's, but when I got there, Victoria was just stepping into the smartest dark-blue automobile, and she never made a suggestion of going back into the house with me or asked whether I had lunched, so I did a little shopping, and came here."

Now, Manxton's automobile was dark-blue; so were a thousand others, but Mary suddenly felt a predilection for red.

"You will see Mrs. Mowbray at dinner to-night," she answered pleasantly, "though she is not going on to court like the rest of us."

"Humph!" grunted the old lady. "At her old tricks, hey? Scheming to be left alone with Manxton." This was said quite as an aside to herself, but she added aloud: "You are much better-looking than I had supposed, my dear. You have not that eager look so many Americans have, like birds peering for worms."

Mary ignored the subject of her own looks and American eagerness, and left the marchioness to the enjoyment of her lunch and sofa while she herself went on a dreary round of visits, nor did she see the old lady again till everybody was assembled in the drawing-room before dinner.

It was a picturesque group of people, this dinner company. Women in

trains and feathers and jewels; men in black-velvet coats and knee-breeches, with cut-steel buttons, and black-silk stockings, with orders on their breasts; or else in uniform or some national court dress. Manxton and his cousin were the only ones in ordinary evening dress, and it seemed to associate their home-staying proclivities in a way Mary did not relish.

Manxton had been so outspoken in his admiration for Mary in her court finery that she went down to receive her guests with the pleasant flutter of gratified vanity that even the most modest of us may feel when fresh from the commendation of the only person whose opinion really matters. It enabled her to welcome Victoria with some appearance of cordiality and to form an impartial estimate of her looks and manners. Mrs. Mountcharles was right; for a Harcourt she was a beauty. Gorgeous masses of reddish hair set off by a fine complexion, long, sleepy eyes of dark-blue, a rather high nose, and exquisite teeth slightly prominent. Her shoulders were perfect, and she had the knack of putting on her clothes with precision. The clothes this evening were exceptionally becoming—black tulle spangled in silver—and her jewels were a little too good for Sir Thomas' daughter or Mr. Mowbray's widow.

In answer to Mary's welcome the lady's brows raised themselves superciliously.

"Yes?" she said. "Manxton seemed to think we ought to know each other, though I doubt whether it is ever a passport to a wife's good graces to be a friend of her husband's."

"I cannot imagine a better," Mary returned, smiling.

"Can't you?" Victoria drawled. "Perhaps London will stimulate your imagination in such respects. We are not conjugal here."

The tone was so colorless that it was impossible to guess whether she meant to be humorous or offensive. It seemed safest to ignore the remark, and Mary asked about Sir Thomas and the Miss Harcourts.

"Jane and Arabella?" Mrs. Mow-

bray responded, with open contempt. "They're always well. I came to town because they make papa's illness an excuse to settle down upon me at Chittering Gorset, but I have to go back there to-night."

"To-night!" echoed Mary. "You are going down into Kent to-night!"

And then dinner was announced, and the strange fact had to be pushed into the back of her mind while she talked to other guests, but in spite of her efforts that moonlight trip would connect itself with a certain dark-blue automobile.

CHAPTER IX.

Dinner is necessarily short where people are going on to a drawing-room, but to one lonely watcher in the Manxton library the meal seemed interminable. Mr. Pitcher had arrived during its progress; had taken what he called a cold snack, and was now *chortling* to see his daughter.

As the ladies left the dining-room the news of his coming was whispered to Mary, and begging Lady Hartingham to act as hostess, she hurried to learn the meaning of this strange freak. His treatment at Carlsbad was by no means over, and he had pledged himself to stay for another month. She felt this sudden move ominous, to say the least, and the hand that turned the library door-knob shook with nervousness.

Mr. Pitcher was lying on the sofa, but at the sound of her silken draperies he sprang to his feet, and, regardless of her finery, gave her a mighty hug.

"Gad!" he exclaimed. "How glad I am to see you, Moll!"

He looked so ill and haggard she felt convinced he was going to tell her his case was hopeless, but that wasn't the surprise fate had prepared.

Her father's hand went fumblingly to the inside pocket of his traveling-coat and drew out a letter across which was pinned a check. He tossed it over to her.

"I am catching to-morrow's steamer home," he said. "Billy has forged my name for sixty thousand dollars."

Grim and short the announcement came.

"Sixty thousand!" she repeated. "There must be some mistake; he could not use any such sum in the short time we have been away."

"He's done it, all right," groaned Mr. Pitcher.

"Even if he has," she said, "you cannot start off by yourself in this impulsive way. You must hush it up from this side."

He shook his head irritably.

"You can cable instructions perfectly well," she urged.

"I can't," he snapped. "There has been a tremendous slump in the stock-market, and ready money isn't on tap, I can tell you. Besides, we've been spending it here like water. I've got to go. I don't know where that boy will land me. No man's income can stand wedges like that cut out of it at a moment's notice. By Heaven, if he doesn't ask my pardon on his knees I'll let him go to jail, where he belongs."

"Oh, no, you won't!" she begged, clinging to him. "Think of the disgrace—think of Billy's future. Let me call Charley—he isn't going out—he can talk to you all night if necessary. He is so kind, so just, you can safely trust his advice."

Her petty jealousy was forgotten. When had her husband ever failed her? But Mr. Pitcher resented such assistance with childish petulance.

"I don't want his advice!" he roared. He always roared under agitation. "I tell you I won't have him told. I've got my pride if I ain't got a handle to my name, and my private affairs ain't a-going to be threshed out between you and your husband."

She knew him too well to resent what he said in moments of excitement, but she felt as if every one was going mad.

"You just said you meant to put Billy in jail if he didn't humble himself to you—and now you talk of privacy. I can't follow, dearest." Her arms went round his neck.

"I can't follow myself," he said wretchedly. "I am miserable beyond

any power of expression. Don't tell Manxton, Mary; let us keep our disgrace to ourselves as long as we can. I won't prosecute. But if I do hush this up don't imagine it's the end; the boy is bound to go from bad to worse—angels could not save him."

He turned away with a sigh that was almost a sob and leaned his head against the mantelpiece. Mary said what she could to comfort him, but it sounded cold and inadequate, probably because present duties were forcing themselves upon her mind; and while she talked the clock chimed a quarter past ten—she had to go.

Guests were hurrying away; from all sides came exclamations of "Where is Lady Manxton?" and Mary banishing her private anxiety managed to say the right word to each. Finally all were gone except Victoria talking to Manxton in a corner, and the marchioness fidgetting with nervousness to be off. Under the pretext of repairing some slight damage to her veil Mary gained the shelter of her own room, but instead of ringing for her maid, she sat in the semidarkness trying to get herself in hand; trying to take a reasonable view of the dangers that Billy's conduct might bring upon them, and persuading herself that her father was in sufficiently good health to make the voyage.

But while she thought of these things she seemed to see, in a mental mirror, Victoria and Manxton on the little sofa in the corner of the drawing-room; and a strange sense of distress swept through her heart. It was not jealousy alone; it was a clear realization of how much Manxton's family meant to him, and how doubly awful criminal disgrace would be viewed from their standpoint. Her husband's room was next to hers, and through the connecting door she heard his voice speaking to his servant, the opening and shutting of drawers and doors, the fall of a boot-tree—all the familiar noises of masculine dressing. Then the servant seemed to go out, carrying something heavy, and Mary ventured to knock.

To her amazement he was dressed in

rough morning clothes, and was in the act of dropping his watch into his pocket and gathering up his change.

"Molly," he said, "I have decided to run down to Chittering Gorset to-night. We have the last meeting of the syndicate to-morrow at eleven and I must discuss some points with my uncle before it takes place. I am sorry not to be here when you get back from your presentation, but I don't believe you will have anything to tell me; there is a ghastly monotony about court functions."

Her face, pale enough before, became a shade paler.

"You are not leaving me to-night!" she gasped. "My father has arrived; he's looking awfully ill, Charley; I'm so anxious about him, and so frightened."

"Frightened?" he said, smiling. "Frightened about what? Going to the drawing-room? That's nonsense, you know. And I couldn't do you any good even if I were there with you. But about going to see my uncle, I really must. I hate starting so early in the morning, whereas it will be delightful motoring down to-night by moonlight."

The very soul of pleading came into her eyes.

"Oh, please stay!" she urged. "I can't let you go. I can't—I can't!"

She felt as if Victoria were tearing him from her; that if only she could keep him misfortune would be held at bay; and yet her reason told her she was getting hysterical, and he hated scenes.

"But your father is here," he said, in the soothing tone one employs with a captious child.

At this poor Mary's temper gave way.

"You hadn't heard my father was here when you ordered your motor. You meant to leave me whether I liked it or not, and, Charley"—here she raised her hand in tragic despair—"you mean to take Mrs. Mowbray down with you! Oh, I know all about your admiration for her! Your family has taken pre-

cious good care that my eyes should be opened. I guessed what was likely to happen when she told me before dinner that she was going down to Chit-tering to-night."

"Did you?" he said, with fine scorn. "Then there is no more to be said except that I do not see exactly what is proved by these damaging facts."

There was a knock at the door; only a servant announcing the automobile, but it made a diversion Mary would have been wise to accept. Fortune gives us these chances to pull up, but women court fate. The door shut, and she resumed:

"It proves that you prefer keeping an engagement with her than doing what I ask you, that you have never been open with me about her, that to-night you have stooped to deceive me!"

"It proves nothing but that your nerves are on edge, and that some one has been stuffing your mind with absurd gossip," he said, with impatience, and added stiffly: "If I can really be of use to you or your father, I will put aside my own preference, but I tell you plainly it will be inconvenient."

"You can do nothing for us," she said icily, walking to her own door.

He held it open for her, and as she passed he bent forward and lightly kissed her cheek. The tears sprang to her eyes at what she considered the cruelty of the caress, but there was no time for anger; her maid was waiting with her wrap, the old marchioness was champing to be off, and Victoria Mowbray had disappeared, leaving a message of good night.

"We are late," said Lady Hartingham, sinking into her corner of the carriage. "I hate crowding to the door of the throne-room with that mob of women. Half of them have no business there, at any rate!"

A battalion of the Grenadier Guards was on duty in the palace quadrangle, sitting their horses like statues, their accouterments gleaming in the moonlight, while inside the brilliant toilets of the women, as they mounted the stairs, were thrown in fine relief by the handsome uniforms of the Yeomen

of the Guard, as well as the royal liveries of the palace servants.

A splendid creature took their cards and passed them to the lord chamberlain, who made the announcement; two pages spread out their trains, and then Lady Hartingham swam ahead with Mary closely following. Half-way across, the marchioness made a sweeping curtsy, and Mary did likewise; as they approached the king and queen another; and yet a third; and then their trains were deftly laid across their arm, and the exit accomplished without turning the back upon royalty.

In thinking it over, Mary wondered whether, after all, the scene hadn't been something like a wax-work show. The steps of the throne, their seated majesties—an innovation, by the way, for the king's convenience—the king's superb uniform, the almost automatic inclination of the head by which the curtsies were acknowledged, the graceful dignity of the queen, also rather inanimate, and then the grouping of the royal princes and princesses, with here a visiting grand duke, and there an Indian rajah; and then, like the chorus in the opera, a great medley of fine folks. There were ladies-in-waiting, and equerries, and certain foreign ambassadors, and distinguished officers of the army and navy, and colonial governors, and cabinet ministers, and here and there a bishop giving a quiet touch to the gay coloring.

Taking the company as a whole, it represented the highest achievements of modern civilization, and yet to Mary the pomp and ceremony seemed an anachronism, something the world had outgrown, something that was stately and beautiful, but a part of the pageantry of the past. And yet six months ago it would have stirred her soul.

CHAPTER X.

Lady Manxton was bored.

The weather was hot, heavily, stiflingly hot; the season nearly over, and—Manxton in Paris. Possibly this last was the real occasion of the discontent

that had fallen on the summer of her happiness. To be sure, he had only gone for four days, and had explained so kindly and considerately the reasons why she should not go with him that she yielded without a murmur, but she didn't like it.

Manxton had been very tender and patient with her since the night he wounded her so deeply by going to Chittering Gorset. Not that he had apologized in set words—that wasn't his way—but he had returned the next day so full of interest in Mr. Pitcher's health, and so ready to make little confidences about the last meeting of the syndicate, that she felt humiliated every time she recalled her jealous outburst. Like most well-bred people, they judged their differences soonest healed by being ignored.

Perhaps it was the memory of that unpleasant scene that made her acquiesce in being left behind now, for in her heart she thought it rather cruel. What if Charley were busy with French bankers all day, he could have been with her at dinner instead of leaving her to dine alone! What if Paris were warm, it couldn't be more torrid than London had been all day! So exhausting had the humidity been that she had not even had the energy to read her letters, and she only faced the task now because dinner was over and she had nothing else to do in the twilight.

The first that met her eye was directed in her father's bold, even hand—bolder and more regular than Billy's, and yet so like it that she wondered the bank should have detected the slight difference. This was not the first time she had heard; she knew her father was safely across, but the momentous meeting—the interview with Billy—had not yet taken place, for the simple reason that the young gentleman and his wife had fled the country upon receiving the paternal summons to meet him in New York. Chalarákis happened to be in Boston harbor with a yacht he had hired, and the Pitchers went with him to Nova Scotia. As Billy never mentioned the sculptor's name except to heap opprobrious epithets upon him,

the fright must have been strong indeed that induced him to accept such hospitality.

Mary tore the envelope open with reluctance. It was all so hopeless, and she could do nothing to help. There was news at last. Billy had condescended to communicate with his father by letter, and Mr. Pitcher not only seemed inclined to forgive, but enclosed the document for Mary to read and return; and a pretty rignarole it was of sentimentality and untruth.

It seemed that Billy had been plunging in stocks with borrowed money; that the market had gone down beyond anything his broker had supposed possible, and in order to save his holdings from being wiped out he had exploited his father's bank-account for a necessary sixty thousand dollars. He said that his father mustn't think he ever meant to keep the money, it was just a temporary accommodation till the excellent stocks he held took an upward turn, and that if he had known where to cable, it would have been all right; but, having lost the Carlsbad address and not wanting Manxton interfering in his affairs, he had just taken the bull by the horns and borrowed without asking. William Pitcher was his name as well as his father's, and the omission of the word junior wasn't a crime! Then followed some pretty sentiments about his father having stood in the place of both father and mother to him, and for the sake of her whom they both loved, he trusted for indulgence in his great need.

The letter bore the stamp of insincerity from beginning to end, and proved with what light-minded indifference Billy could commit crime. But Mary was thankful to have him forgiven at any price, glad that her father should take a more lenient view of the outrage, and relieved beyond words that scandal should not come to Manxton through her.

From her earliest acquaintance with her husband she had known that pride of a certain kind was dominant in his character—pride of race, pride of independence, pride of his good name—

but until they had paid a flying visit to his Cambridgeshire estate, Manxton Abbey, she had hardly grasped his passionate reverence for his forebears; how every step in his career had reference to restoring the family to its old importance and to effacing the stigma put upon it by his cousin's mad follies.

She folded up his letter and took the next on the pile.

Who doesn't know the writing of the well-instructed Englishwoman? It seems to proclaim in its vertical strokes the upstanding moral tendencies of these ladies in contradistinction to the running obliqueness of their Continental sisters.

This particular epistle was an invitation to Mary and Manxton to spend the week-end at Chittering Gorset. It was from Jane Harcourt, and quite full of pretty apologies for not having given the invitation before, but Sir Thomas' illness and the strain of entertaining his colleagues of the syndicate had taxed their establishment to its limit, and forced them into seeming inhospitality. Jane had an afterthought which she embodied in a postscript. She wrote:

You will not see Victoria, for she started for the Continent yesterday and is now in Paris.

The letter fell from Mary's hands, while a wave of color swept over her face and neck, and then retreating, left her pale as the white evening frock she wore.

Of course, Manxton hadn't wanted her in Paris when Victoria was there! In her fool's worship she had just been giving thanks that his high sense of honor was not to suffer humiliation through Billy. His sense of honor had strange lapses. She felt choking; it wasn't only jealousy, it was a wild homesickness; a longing for her father's protection; a sense of ill treatment at the hands of these hard, cruel people; a desire to leave her money for Manxton to enjoy and to go away anywhere—it didn't matter where.

The heat of the room was suffocating; she walked with uncertain steps

to the open window, and, leaning against the frame, drew in the cooler air in gasps.

The daylight was fading, but enough remained to see distinctly what was passing in the street, while above, a few billowy clouds still caught a tinge of sunset pink. An English summer day dies slowly. From an area across the way a cat came sneaking to the curb, and, pausing for a moment with stealthy foot, she streamed across, her stomach sweeping the ground. A grand carriage, on its return from duty, rolled smoothly past, its coachman and footman sitting the box with that relaxation so dear to flunkedom when removed from the master's eye; now and again a jaded cab horse hastened stableward, its three-legged hoof-beats ringing its weariness on the asphalt.

Mary didn't know she noticed any of these things—she felt absolutely separated from external sensations, and yet to the end of her life she will never recall that dreadful evening without seeing and hearing with startling vividness those commonplace incidents of the streets. What really held her spell-bound was purely a figment of her fancy, a picture her jealous imagination spread before her eyes. She seemed to see Manxton in a little open fiacre, with Victoria beside him, driving along a great avenue of chestnut-trees, and he was listening to her with his sweet, grave smile—was there anything so adorable as Charley's smile?—while she, instead of being haughty and contemptuous, was prattling with the trustful gaiety of a child.

Suddenly something recalled her to actuality—something that made her pulses bound before her brain had registered the cause. It was only a boy's voice, far down the street, calling an extra; no unusual occurrence. The tones were clear, childish, sweetly shrill, and in the quiet that had fallen on the neighborhood, getting every second more distinct. Once more her heart contracted in that horrid way—her own name struck upon her ear!

What was he saying? What could Manxton have to do with an extra?

Had there been an accident in Paris? Was he injured? Was he killed?

She leaned far out of the window, seeing nothing but the boy's advancing figure—hardly daring to breathe lest she should lose his next cry.

"Terrible tragedy on an American yacht! Lady Manxton's brother wounds his wife and kills himself!"

"Not Charley—not Charley—only Billy!" broke from her, and then in sudden shame at the overpowering relief, she began to realize the horror.

Billy, who had always been their anxiety, was hereafter to be their public disgrace. A would-be murderer, a suicide, an everlasting stain upon the family!

The shock braced her to quick thinking. She would send out and buy a paper. She would make no effort to ignore the news to her own servants; let them know at once their mistress was being proclaimed over London as the sister of a criminal—but, thank God, Manxton wasn't there! Thank God that before he could possibly get back to crush her with his pity she would be far away!

It was Wednesday; one of the fast German boats sailed from Southampton on Thursday at noon. She had all night to make her preparations, and she would go home. *Go home!* The words lent wings to her feet; she thought of her father, lonely, terrified, probably ill, and all hesitation was at an end. She rang violently, and the butler responded—a family man who had known trouble. Something in his expression made her guess he already knew hers, but she told him, and sent him out to make arrangements for her sailing.

Her instructions were clearly given. Lord Manxton was not to be informed till after his return—she was very determined about that—but she would leave a letter for him, and if necessary she could be back in three weeks. Three weeks! She smiled grimly to herself as she said it, so sure she felt she should never come back. One thing struck her as strange—that the news should have reached her through the public papers, and even while she

wondered the explanation came. A despatch was put in her hands.

SAMUEL KINGSTON TO LADY MANXTON.

My Lady: Mr. Pitcher had a stroke on hearing of Mr. William's death. Slight improvement has taken place.

Just as she feared! And yet why did she say feared? Surely temporary oblivion was a merciful dispensation under the circumstances. She sent her answer to Kingston to say she was coming as fast as steam could bring her, and then, having given her orders to her maid, she addressed herself to her last task—to writing to Manxton. Oddly enough, the sense of jealousy was fading in the face of real misfortune. By her own act she was deliberately putting him from her, leaving him to all the influences she had recently learned to distrust, but the reason was plain. She no longer considered herself the wife he should have chosen. The future line of Manxton must have no hereditary taint in the blood. Suppose she should have a son like Billy—weak, irresponsible, criminal—how could she stand the responsibility for Manxton's disappointment? And yet—as far as she knew—the Pitchers were morally and physically sound, running back through generations of plain farming people to New England ancestry that had drifted Westward.

It was midnight, and the house perfectly quiet when she began her letter—began to tear her heart out, she told herself—and she wrote and destroyed, and wrote again till the clock struck two, and she had to stop. The words came faster than the pen could scratch them down—a very passion of love and renunciation.

She said she did not know the legal bearings of such questions, but if Manxton knew of any way to free himself from her, from a family tainted with crime, he would meet with no opposition from her. She loved him so entirely that his happiness, his ambitions, were infinitely more to her than her own craving to be with him. She had heard—and she supposed it must be true—that his own people had hoped and expected that he would have mar-

ried Victoria Mowbray, and she was free to confess that she had been jealous of her—even that very evening, before she heard about Billy, she had been furiously angry at hearing Victoria was in Paris—but she wasn't now. All hard feelings had gone. If Manxton cared for his cousin, she was only sorry that she had ever come between them; sorry that he had mistaken his feelings in regard to her. It was dreadful to go off without seeing him, or asking his permission, but some things could only be done abruptly and violently; that way or not at all! Besides, her duty to her father was imperative—and she enclosed Kingston's despatch. In conclusion, she told him that no matter what the future held in store, he had given her six months of absolutely perfect happiness, and the remembrance would give glow and color to her life to its very end.

CHAPTER XI.

There is an annex to a great hospital in New York where the rooms for private patients are large and the corridors airy, and even in summer a pleasant coolness pervades the atmosphere.

Mary's electric brougham was waiting outside, and Mary herself was going up to the third floor in the elevator for an interview with her sister-in-law; just as she had done in Boston when they had heard of Billy's marriage.

The papers had exaggerated Mrs. Billy's wound. It proved troublesome, but never dangerous, and as it gave her a notoriety she adored, after freeing her from Billy, whom she detested, and, better than either, furnished a valid reason for making enormous demands upon the Pitcher purse, she was able to bear the days of her seclusion with equanimity.

Seclusion for her did not involve exclusion of the male element from her company, as Mary had reason to remark, for, as the elevator in which she was mounting reached the third floor, Chalarákis was in the act of getting into a descending one beside it. She did not know him to speak to, but

the coarse face and pointed ears were unmistakable; and believing, as she did, that he was responsible for Billy's burst of jealous rage, her heart hardened sevenfold against Violet. Indeed, she was so outraged and angry to find him there that her temper got the better of her manners, and her greeting to her sister-in-law was a sharp reproof.

"Do you receive men in your bedroom?" she asked, hardly waiting for the nurse, who had placed a chair for her, to leave.

Violet was lying in childish abandon on embroidered pillows; her neck and arms bare, except for a string of pearls round her throat and jeweled chains at her wrists, while the garment that clothed her girlish figure seemed to consist entirely of lace and lilac ribbons. Her hair was twisted in a mass of fluffy curls on the top of her head and tied with a great bow, and both beside her on the bed, and scattered about the room, were huge bunches of her favorite flowers.

She opened her eyes wide at Mary's blunt question about receiving men, and answered:

"Yes, of course—it's very fashionable—don't you?"

Mary scorned to answer. Why should she allow herself to be aggrieved by anything this woman chose to do? She made some inquiries about her health and expressed her father's anxiety and her own.

"I'm glad some of you have come to see about me at last," said Violet reproachfully.

"My ship got in only yesterday," Mary replied gently, "and my father has been very ill. The news of Billy's death and your wounding was too much for him. He has had a stroke of paralysis—but he's better now, and has sent me to find out about you."

"Oh! I'm not going to die—no thanks to Billy, however; he meant it, all right, but he always was a goat where guns are concerned. Why, in Nova Scotia he couldn't hit a bird at twenty feet! Since your father pretends to feel an interest in me, I wish you would tell him that I am clean

broke, and it is awfully expensive here. We might as well come to a settlement amicably as have a lawsuit."

Mary could hardly believe her ears. The girl's light-hearted tone, her slang, her grasping desire to use the situation to extort money seemed unbelievable.

"Why should we have a lawsuit?" she asked coldly. "My father has no desire to deny his obligations to you; he will be willing to make a proper provision for you. Do not let us talk of money now. I came to ask you for some crumbs of comfort for him in regard to Billy. Couldn't the poor boy's dreadful action be set down to temporary insanity? Had you noticed anything unbalanced in his conduct before the end came?"

Mrs. Billy gave a derisive laugh.

"Unbalanced!" she repeated. "When was he ever anything else? Plain lunatic—that's what he was. You and I might as well come out flat-footed and say what we mean. I married him because I thought his father was rich and you were fashionable, and I meant to work the situation for all it was worth; but I never counted upon the madness of his jealousy. I swear to goodness there wasn't a thing between Chalarákis and me he had any right to resent, but every time he saw us together he just got raving. Chal wanted to get some fishing in Nova Scotia, but Billy made the yacht such a hell that we determined to go back to New York. You see, we had left Boston for good, stored the furniture, and given up the apartment. One night coming along the coast on our way home—I guess it was off Nantucket, or one of those islands—he saw Chalarákis tucking me up in my chair on deck, and something made him furious—I suppose he thought Chal was too long about it—for he sprang at him like a tiger, and tried to strike him in the face. Chal was a great deal bigger and heavier, and he gave him a shove that sent him sprawling. He looked so funny that I laughed, and that made him madder than ever, and before we realized what he was up to, he drew a revolver from his pocket and fired. I don't know

which he aimed at, but it hit me, and when he heard me scream, he ran to me, and kissed me and begged me to forgive him, and because I didn't answer—for I was nearly dead with pain and faintness—he put the pistol to his own head and fired again."

Mary's face had grown deathlike in its pallor, and her eyes, always large and serious, were dim with pity, not for the self-centered creature before her, but for poor, tortured Billy, crazed by love and despair. Violet rattled on as if she were describing some melodrama she had witnessed.

"Chalarákis ran the yacht into the nearest harbor and got a doctor, for Billy wasn't dead; and they thought, maybe, they could save him; but in the midst of the operation he died."

For the first time she shuddered; she had some personal associations with searching for bullets, and the train of thought sickened her.

"It is just as well he killed himself," she said quickly, "for he would have become either idiotic or violent. They found something pressing on his brain that must have been there for years—the result of some early injury, the doctor said. Did he ever have any fall when he was growing up?"

Did he ever have a fall?

Of course he had. Why hadn't she thought of it before?

Alas for human sympathy when confronted with burning personal issues! When Mary heard the doctor's opinion that some former injury to Billy's brain was responsible for his strange conduct, a perfect tide of joyful emotion swept over her. She forgot to be sorry for his suffering and his sin, forgot to resent the frivolous cruelty that had driven him to kill himself, forgot everything but joy at having a burden taken from her heart. This taint of crime and insanity wasn't congenital, wasn't in the Pitcher blood. It was something accidental, extraneous, something she had no part in, and that could never show itself in her or her children, if she had any. She was free to go back to Charley if he wanted her.

Violet was waiting for an answer

while Mary was sending her fancy down long avenues of hope.

"Yes, he had a fall," she answered, almost as detached from sorrow for Billy as Violet herself. "It was a great many years ago at the mine; he chose to ride the engineer's bronco when he had been told not to, and it threw him and kicked him in the head, and for months he was subject to strange lapses of memory, but we supposed he got over it. Fancy his poor brain having been oppressed all these years! You are *sure* that was what the doctor said—that it was not congenital?"

She bent eagerly forward, her crape-clad figure hanging like a storm cloud over the gay little person in the bed.

Violet turned her head impatiently.

"I have talked a great deal about things I should like to forget," she said querulously, "and you use such long words I don't know what they mean. If congenital is something a person has always had, then Billy *didn't* always have pressure on his brain, according to that Buzzard's Bay doctor; it came from an injury. For Heaven's sake, don't talk about it any more, and when you go out, send the nurse to me; you will find her in the corridor near the elevator."

After this broad hint Mary did not venture to stay, and, indeed, she was not sorry to gain the seclusion of her carriage and have time to think over the strange things she had just heard. Her point of view in regard to her life and its obligations had been changed by the opinion of that "Buzzard's Bay doctor," as Violet called him, changed in a moment from despair to hope. To be sure, there were plenty of troubles left—her father might always be an invalid—her husband might never forgive her precipitate flight and avowed jealousy—Victoria Mowbray's supercilious loveliness was as threatening to-day as yesterday, and yet—The sky was bluer than when she came out; the streets had lost the desolate look of late July; crowds of working girls were surging from the shops and offices, chattering and laughing; and the sea-breeze, sweeping from the Battery

along the cañons of the city, brought the reminder that only a few thousand miles of ocean lay between her and her love. If he wanted her back, only six days stretched between her and happiness! But then he had not written; he had not cabled; he had treated her going with silent acquiescence. Why should she hope he would ever want her back?

At her own house Kingston met her at the door, and said Mr. Pitcher was awake and dressed, and anxious to see her, and, hurrying into a cooler dress, she went to his room. The late afternoon was his best time, and that particular day the improvement in his speech was so marked that it was evident he would soon resume his usual semi-invalid habits; for he had been under medical discipline since the early summer, and was accustomed to restrictions.

He was sitting in his chair by the open window, one hand idly tapping the sill, while the other—the paralyzed one—lay supine in his lap. When Mary came in, he raised his head and smiled—a sad, patient smile, all the sadder because only one side of the lips fully responded to the impulse.

She drew her chair close to his and told him of her visit to Violet, suppressing all that could excite his anger and dwelling upon the few kind things that had been said, and especially upon the fact of Billy's mental condition. She recalled his accident with the engineer's bronco, the injury which they so little appreciated at the time; and by degrees the conversation went back to days still earlier, days her father loved to dwell upon when poverty was happiness because his wife had shared them.

All emotion was bad for him, and it alarmed Mary to see tears in his eyes and to find his speech thicker than it had been a moment before. He was saying something about having tried to do his duty to Billy; he hoped Moll knew and would forgive his failure.

Mary took the feeble hand.

"You always did your very best for Billy and me, daddy, dear. Mother couldn't have been more tender and

forgiving than you have always been. And I know Billy felt it, too, and was sorry when he thought over the foolish things he had done."

Poor Mr. Pitcher sighed.

"I guess he wasn't to blame," he said wearily. "I guess that woman drove him to 'most everything he done. Well, he's safe with his mother now, and I sha'n't be long behind him."

Mary didn't interrupt his thoughts; he seemed quieter, almost to enjoy the idea of going to join his wife and Billy, though, as a matter of fact, the rapidity with which he was recovering from his shock showed a vitality that would probably prolong his life for many long years—happy years she hoped and believed.

Presently he spoke again.

"Where is Manxton?" he demanded. "Did he let you cross the ocean alone, knowing that Billy had killed himself and I was paralyzed?"

"I came alone," she answered gently, "but Manxton was in Paris. He didn't know. You mustn't blame my husband, father. You hurt me when you do."

"Has he cabled?" asked the sick man, working himself into a high state of excitement.

Mary's "No" was very faint. Oh, if he would only stop driving home these unpleasant truths!

"Damn him!" burst from Mr. Pitcher. "Ashamed of us, is he?"

Mary laid her hand on his shoulder, saying firmly:

"You are making yourself ill, and me unhappy. There has been some mistake about his letters and cables. You may be very sure he has done what is right—at least, you might give him the benefit of the doubt."

"I knew what would come of marrying one of those fellows," he went on huskily. "It doesn't take them long to cool off when they've got what they want out of American pockets."

"Father," she said, standing away from him in displeasure, "I cannot listen to you. If his love has cooled, mine is stronger than ever. I love him so entirely that no word to his disadvantage shall be said in my presence."

And at this point, to her great relief, the doctor was announced, and, leaving the nurse to make her report, she went down-stairs.

The drawing-room looked invitingly dark and cool in its summer dress of flowered chintz, with its drawn shades and polished stretch of parquet; and Mary, shutting the door behind her, began pacing up and down trying to quiet the agitation of spirit induced by her father's plain dealing with Manxton's conduct. What he had said was, after all, a crude statement of the facts as they would strike any disinterested person. Because she, in her infatuation, had glossed over these facts with excuses and extenuations, it was no less true that Manxton could have cabled a dozen times had he cared to do so; and the courage and hope that had buoyed her up during her drive home from the hospital were ebbing fast. Up and down she walked, trying to regain the peace of mind so rudely dispelled, and instead of peace came tears.

There was some movement in the hall outside, the opening and shutting of doors, a sound of approaching footsteps, and, remembering she had left word she wished to see the doctor on his way out, she stopped her restless pacing and dried her eyes.

Tears are contrary things. Sometimes they flow from sentiment and are dried by grief, and sometimes, scorching and uncontrollable, they mark the profoundest sorrow the human heart can know.

Mary wiped hers, and they wouldn't stop, and so she turned her head away, and, steadying her voice, addressed a commonplace remark to her visitor.

"You think my father really better—" she began, and found herself clasped tight in the arms of the intruder, with kisses on her cheek and words of welcome in her ear; but the voice was Manxton's, and the very joy of life was hers.

Hours afterward, when their happiness had taken on a more reasonable calm, Mary ventured to ask certain questions—questions that seemed trivial

enough viewed in the light of Manxton's love, but which had tortured her poor heart in its loneliness.

"Why didn't you cable to me, Charley?" she asked, in gentle reproach. "It would have saved me such unhappiness."

"But I did," he answered. "Only I was stupid enough to imagine Billy and his wife would have been taken to Boston, and I cabled to you there."

A puzzled look came over her face.

"Then why did you yourself come here?" she asked.

Manxton's grave smile broadened into a laugh.

"Dear Molly," he said, "you must have had legal ancestors with a talent for cross-examination. I discovered you by the simple device of telephoning from the wharf to my down-town office. They were just about closing, but Gunkle was there, and told me all I wanted to know."

"Bear with me, Charley," she said, "but I have been so wretched."

"Of course you have, dearest," he answered, "and I have been a thick-headed ass. I really couldn't believe you were seriously annoyed about Victoria till I got the letter you left behind for me. I was conscious of such entire innocence that I suppose I did not appreciate how appearances were against me. She was about to make a

second runaway match in defiance of her father, and chose to take me into her confidence—you see, she had to have somebody to draw up the settlements, and afterward to give her away—and so I was the victim, worse luck to it!"

"And Paris?" asked Mary, laughing.

"Oh! She and her South African husband were there on their honeymoon—it is diamonds this time, and more money than manners! I saw them only for a few moments, when they came to beg me to break the news of their marriage to Sir Thomas."

A burning blush overspread her face.

"How you must despise me for my lack of faith," she said humbly, "but terrible things had come to my knowledge about Billy, and I felt humiliated and miserable. I couldn't help seeing your family didn't like me, and I hated my money; it seemed my only recommendation after Billy had destroyed our self-respect."

Manxton looked at her very gravely.

"My dearest," he said, "my people and your money have nothing to do with our affection as man and wife. Once and for all time believe I love you for yourself alone; as a companion and a wife you are all the world to me. You are welcome to ignore my family and to throw your money into the sea, but never again doubt my word."



THE COMING DAY

GRIEVE not, sad heart, there is an end of tears!

Think not that sorrow shadows all the years;

The darkest hour comes before the day,

The saddest moments pass like night away.

For in the world is love and song and light;

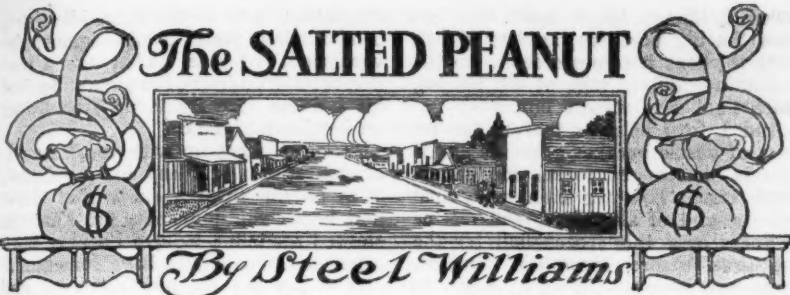
Work to be done and battles still to fight.

Mourn not the past, whate'er is right will be,

And each new dawn conceals a victory.

TORRANCE BENJAMIN.

The SALTED PEANUT



By Steel Williams



HAT they calls the "Lure of Gold" makes me a wanderer on the face of the earth; and from that day misfortune has claimed me for her own. The yellow rainbow dances across desert and over

range till at last it lands me just above timber-line, on the steep, bare breast of one of the highest mountains of the northern Rockies. And there I locates a claim which I facetious names the Peanut, 'count of the peculiar shape outcroppin'.

It's close to a month before I finishes my cabin and gets, what women-folks term, "settled"; and I'm so complete wore out from draggin' timber up the slope that I vows never to move again, no matter in what part of the gold sky the yellow bow appears. Twenty-five years of chasin' after it has certain made me weary and I sudden finds that I don't even hanker for whisky or a faro-bank, though, heretofore, both have been strong drawin'-cards for me. But now I don't seem to care for nothin' except rest, so I seldom goes down to the camp which scatters here and there, among the rocks at the foot of the mountain near two miles below. Course I keeps pluggin' away at the vein which has a pitch that lets me run a tunnel, and though I don't make but a few inches a day the showin' is good enough to keep me workin' steady.

I puts in a even year this way and

spring is comin' on. Then I gets uneasy and begins thinkin' about other golden lands, though I feels more'n half sure that if I stick by the Peanut it ultimate turns out good meat.

But one afternoon my eye happens to light on the stage as it comes up the cañon. I leans from my cabin winder a-watchin' it as it stops in front of the "Sorrer's Antidote" which is then the only place in Silver where liquor and a faro-bank can be found; and I'm seized with a awful strong desire to take in the attractions that's offered by that peculiar-named saloon; but bein' well acquainted with the habits of "Iowa" Tabor, I knows it's saner for him to stay right where he is or it's probable the Peanut's bank-roll will vanish before he gets back.

So temporary I resists the call of the tiger and absent-minded turns my eyes to the south. The sun's glittering the snow-caps of the Owhyee range, but present the flamin' ball drops behind the peak my cabin clings to so uncertain, and the white head flushes crimson—then turns blood-red.

"Maybe it's a omen."

I shivers, for I never sees 'em look quite so gory before; but I keeps on starin' at 'em till at last it seems as if them cold, fadin' peaks and me is the only things that's left in the world. Then my eye falls to the camp, for I feels the need of more sociability than I'm extractin' from the lonely, frownin' crests that are now rapid turnin' to an icy blue. A thin darkness is risin' over Silver which blurs the rough-

sawed buildings till I can't tell 'em from the big boulders; and as night's circle thickens it comes creepin' up the mountain leavin' a lake of ink behind, which final swallers my hut.

And I firm believes that the awful sense of desolation that grips me as the light is blotted out, makes me understand, exact, how the man, who final sees the end of all things, will feel as he gazes over this frozen ball for the last time before committin' suicide. Then, one by one, the lights begin to twinkle, faint but cheerful, in the valley five thousand feet below; and soon a big, red one flashes its seducin' beam into a pair of brown eyes that absorbs it mighty greedy, for it seems as if it is givin' me a special invite to join in the good-fellership that's now on tap in the Sorrer's Antidote.

I s'pose there is some man in the world who could have resisted that bid, but it wasn't me; for I unhesitatin' got my lantern, lifted my dust from its hidin'-place in the bunk-log, buckled on gun, and the next minute I drop down the mountain 'bout as fast as it's safe for me to do on the rocky path that leads me to human kind.

But gettin' too hasty I stumbles just as I reaches the stock-pile of the Gold Dollar mine. And that fall ultimate proves to be a terrible serious matter, not only to myself but to three people who I has never heard of. I saves my lantern, though it's at the expense of my hide which gets barked by little pieces of quartz that have rolled from the pile into the path. The language I uses to express my feelings over the accident is plenty fervid, though I admits it wasn't nowise appropriate to my attitude.

Risin' from my knees, I finds that I has unconscious gripped some of the flinty stuff that's tore me; and, careless-curious, I glances at it when my practised eye catches a dull, yellow glitter that tells me it certain carries five hundred dollars gold a ton; and after lookin' at 'em a few seconds I mechanical slips the samples into my pocket.

Five minutes later I saunters to the Antidote bar for a few fingers of grief

eradicator, and sees a middle-sized, brown-haired youth leanin' against the varnished, red pine. That he's a tenderfoot don't admit of any question, but his hairless face lights up friendly as he ketches my glance.

"Glad to meet up with you," says I, affable stickin' out my fist a-grinnin'. "I'm a-dyin' from a six 'weeks' thirst and hopes you joins me, for I'm that starved for talk I believe I'd have even asked a Chinaman to have somethin'."

The boy has the most innocent and confidin' gray eyes I ever looks into, and for a second a half-embarrassed smile flickers 'em, then he grasps my rough hand hearty a-laughin' through his strong white teeth.

"I sure ain't got the heart to refuse a dyin' man."

But I notices that he don't swaller his whisky like he's much used to drinkin' the liquid fire that the old-timer handles as easy as the kid would have gulped circus lemonade. He sort of chokes over his liquor, but I pretends not to see that he's burnin' up and, to give him a chance to get his breath, I hands my buckskin to the barkeep, and asks for five dollars in silver. As the dust is bein' poured into the scales the boy's eyes glue themselves on the yellow grains as if he never sees native gold before.

"Want to look at it?" I chuckles, for his face is a picture of burnin' desire to get it in his fingers.

His outstretched hand is my answer, and we sit down at a small table which has a big, brass lamp swinging above it. Then he pours a ounce into his itchin' palm and literal gloats over the glintin' dust; but present he moistens his dry lips and exclaims in a low though excited tone:

"That's the kind of stuff I comes to the mountains to get, but"—his voice becomes despondent—"the saloon man just tells me that Mr. Simpson gets blowed to pieces last week, so I guess I'll have to go back to Ohio without gettin' what I wants—bad."

"What'd old Ike have to do with your gettin' rich?" I inquires mild curious, as I ain't wise to what he means.

But the kid is just takin' another drink—for he thinks he has to treat—so it's some minutes 'fore he's able to explain. The liquor apparent flies to his head quick, for when he does get his breath he's not only boyish but likewise whisky-confidential. And 'mong other things I learns the late defunct was a old friend of the kid's widder mother.

"Thunder, how I hates to go back empty-handed!" he sighs dejected, after explainin' how he comes to strike the camp. "It's took me a year to talk ma into lettin' me have the money to try my luck on; and now," wipin' his perspirin' brow, "the only chance I ever'll have to make my pile is ruined by this terrible accident."

"Oh, I dunno as that scattered gent was the only man in this section who knew 'bout mines." My tone is a little miffed.

"No; course not," he replies hurried explanatory, "but, you see, ma tells me I must go by Simpson's judgment regardless of anybody else's."

"Which is sure unfortunate," I mellers sympathetic, "as there's certain plenty of chances if you was only free to jump in."

By now the boy acts like he considers me a old friend, and he looks at me as if he's appealin' for backin', and says:

"I just can't bear to think of goin' back to work on our farm."

Then he bulges his chest defiant, like he's screwin' his courage to the stick-in-point of declaring himself independent of petticoat government and laughs questioning:

"A feller's got to cut loose from his mother's apron-strings sometimes." I nods my head as I pulls reflective on my straw-colored lip. "And"—the gleam in the gray eyes shows his mind is made up—"I don't see why I should lose a chance for a fortune 'count of a woman's foolish notions."

Then the talk drifts to the big strikes that's been made and I points out the Gold Dollar as one that's been picked up for five thousand and is present rated at as many millions. When he

hears them figures he don't say a word but sits there with gripped hands and breathin' quick, but he soon shows what's revolvin' in his excited brain as he exclaims with all the inexperienced confidence of youth:

"That's the kind of one I'm a-going to get, and show ma that I don't need any guardian to tell me where to invest money."

His talk's amusin' but I ain't none surprised by it, for I've heard many a man of twice his years say just as foolish things when the gold fever was ragin' in his veins. Then I accidental mentions my location.

"The—Peanut," he laughs. "What a funny name for a gold-mine!" And with a whimsical grin he airs his scant minin' lingo by sniggerin': "If I had to eat it, I'd want it—salted."

Now I solemn affirms that up to this minute I never thinks of tryin' to annex the greenbacks that the kid tells me he has belted under the nickel-plated gun he wears too far in front for quick handlin'. But when he flashes his joke my fingers are toyin' with the quartz that skins my knees and, without reflectin', I shoves the pay-dirt under his nose as I chuckles:

"How'd that salt suit you?"

His face instant changes from jest to deadly earnest as his itching fingers clutches the ore, and the lust of gold is in his covetous eyes as he narrows them on the yellow spots. And the next second he turns pale as he half gasps in a almost beseechin' tone:

"You—you wouldn't sell me a interest—would you?"

Course there ain't no doubt but what I could have sold him any part of my claim for the forty-five hundred he has on him; but considerin' what I now has in mind, I feels that it'll be best for him to own the whole Peanut; so I tells him I can't think of makin' a deal then, as I only runs into the stuff that evenin' and that sometimes such a showin' don't continue when you fires the next shot.

"I've got everything ready for a blast the first thing in the morning," I begins, lyin' wholesale, "and if you feels

like climbin' the mountain 'bout nine, you can touch the fuse yourself so you'll know for certain what blows out. Then"—my tone's complete indifferent—"if you wants to take a gamble maybe I'll talk trade to you."

"You bet I'll be there," glows the kid, radiant emphatic. "But"—his voice apologetic—"I got to get to bed, for I've hardly had any sleep since leavin' home, and," he twinkles, "nothin' on earth but gold'd kept me up this long."

I warns him not to say anything about my find and tells him where to strike the path, then he leaves me to meditate alone. The faro-table is runnin' full-blast and there's a poker-game to get into; but there's no time for amusement as I has an almighty hard night's work in front of me which I concludes to get at immediate.

As I climbs, the blunted thing I calls my conscience unexpected goes to prickin' me. It ain't the fear of gettin' caught that agitates me, for there ain't no camp-law that strings a man for doctorin' up his claim, that kind of a matter bein' left to the cold-decked individual to settle private. And I believe I states how the kid wears his Colt's, so I ain't none alarmed on his account. But what really hurts me is the thought of betrayin' the boy's confidence, for, infant that he is, I hates terrible to lose his good opinion.

And, too, I've taken a powerful fancy to him for, while nobody'd believe it to see me now, his trustin' young face is a purty good picture of Iowa Tabor when he was in bud, and believed in folks, and thought everybody—honest. Funny the foolishness a man believes in at twenty-one, and how little he believes in anything at forty-nine.

But no matter what happens the Peanut has to be salted or the boy'll know me for a liar; so I fills my pockets from the stock-pile and 'tween then and break of day I packs up—without a light—enough ore to make the showin' I considers is required. But I've hardly got the salt ready for firin' when I sees that eager young gold-hunter boundin' up the path as nimble as a mountain-goat.

"You're a-hastenin' to your own undoin'," I laughs cynical, for by this time lusty Greed has strangled wore-out Conscience, and I'm anxious to close the deal quick as possible.

"I told you I'd be on time," he pants, a few minutes later, moppin' his wet, flushed face, though he's so impatient for action that he can't wait to get his breath 'fore he gasps: "Let's touch her off right away, 'cause I'm wild to see what we'll find."

Seein' I knows what it'll be I ain't quite so curious, but I takes the lantern, and the kid follers me into the tunnel and lights the fuse, then we leg it outside. In a few seconds there's a dull roar and that excited boy is so crazy to see what the powder has knocked out that I has to hold him to keep him from runnin' in and bein' smothered. Course you knows what we finds when the smoke clears, but it's all new to the half-mad kid and before his brain has a chance to clear, Wade Rogers owns the "Salted Peanut" and I has four thousand of his money. Then I packs up my traps and, as a legal sharp would probable word it in a indictment for the swindle, "the Salter thereupon left the Saltee in undisputed possession."

When I gets down to the saloon I invests in a century stack a-tryin' to add a couple of extry wrappers to the roll for travelin'-expenses, as I calculates to take the stage next morning for parts unknown. But I flirts with Fortune most unsuccessful, for after sixteen hours of buckin' that hungry tiger Wade's four thousand, that was, has shrunk to one thousand, that is. Now this heartbreakin' setback changes my notion 'bout leavin' as I'm stuck to get even. It's long near noon when the kid comes down for supplies and sees me settin' in front of the hotel.

"Hello!" he exclaims, pleased surprised. "I thought you was goin' on the stage."

And of course I has to explain why I changes my plans.

"I should think you'd feel most like committin' suicide to lose all that money in one day—I know I would." Then

there's an alarmin' expression in his good-looking face and his eyes dark as he adds in a tone that actual makes me cold: "Now just suppose that the Peanut 'stead of bein' genuine"—I can't hardly keep my face to him—"has actually been salted." There ain't a shadder of a doubt in my mind that he means every word that follers: "I'd blow my head off the minute I found it out."

I now sees that I'm goin' to be a murderer as well as a thief, but I tries not to give him any tip to the icy sweat I'm enjoyin' by forcing a ghastly grin to my half-paralyzed lips.

"That'd sure be a mighty idiotic thing to do." I realizes that spite of myself I'm mumblin' my words, but I stumbles on: "For the proper way to handle such a deal is to fill the cold-deck gent full of lead."

He sort of stares at me a second; then explanatory questions, anxious sympathetic:

"You talk funny; be you sick?"

My heart starts to beatin' right again and I answers in my regular meller bass:

"While you was speakin' I has a slight shock which tongue-ties me a little, but"—I hammers my big fist agin' my chest to prove my words—"I'm fit as a fiddle now."

Wade's face lights up relieved, and harkin' back to the broken thread, he laughs:

"Killin' wouldn't get my money though, and"—he flushes—"you don't know ma."

Then he sudden tumbles that he ain't a-givin' the old lady a very big send-off to a stranger and explains hasty: "I ought not to have said that, for at heart there ain't a better woman ever lives than my mother; but, you see"—his boyish smile and shrug would have been rib-splittin' to me at any other time—"she just can't help from constant remindin' one of his mistakes."

"Which is mighty wearin'," I concedes, with a laugh, "but if every man who has to stand *that* should commit suicide, it's my idee that the females

would soon have the earth to their-selves."

"Well, I know one woman who ain't that way, anyhow, and it's 'count of her that I feels I has got to make a lot of money—quick," flings the kid from over his shoulder as he heads for the path.

"They always feels that way 'bout the one girl they invests with angelic atri-boots," I chuckles silent. "Felt so myself more'n once, but"—my smile grows some cynical—"when I comes to close examine their wings I invariable finds hen feathers 'stead of the angel plumage I first takes it for."

But present my eyes foller the kid as I idle speculates on what kind of look-in' female this talkative ma of his probable is.

"Judgin' from her boy," I laughs as he passes out of sight behind the stragglin' red pines, "she must be a onusual good sample of the mature article."

Then my mind jumps from speculative foolishness to serious actualities, and I begins to figure on how to get the kid prepared for the terrible disappointment that's comin' to him before he's many days older. If I'd had the money to make good I'd have follered him and 'fessed up and given him back his roll.

"But I might win it for him yet to-day," I reflects and instant hikes for the faro-table.

The best I can do is to break even and though I gambles steady for the next week I only manages to quit as I started.

Then one afternoon Wade asks me to go up to the location with him. He looks ten years older, and I know that by now he's done enough work to show him there ain't any more such ore as he picks up when he touches off the salt. Natural my first idee is that I got to look out for a gun-play, but I soon sees there's nothin' ugly in his face which simply shows the signs indicatin' a near broken-hearted kid.

He don't have anything to say as we climb the mountain, though as a matter of precaution I lets him lead the way. I follers him into the tunnel and, pickin'

up his lantern which he's left burnin', he swings it along the face of the vein. I sees he's under a terrible strain as the swayin' light deepens the lines in his haggard cheeks. Then in a dull, low tone he points a tremblin' finger at the ledge.

"I want you to look it over and tell me if you sees any sign of"—his words seem to most choke him—"gold."

It don't take me two minutes to see that there's a entire absence of the yellow metal, but I delays quite a spell a-scannin' and rescannin' the barren quartz, for I takes the time to think what I must say, as I simple don't dare speak the plain, unfrilled truth. Then I lifts the sledge and knocks off a few pieces and he trails me to daylight.

"You must have overlooked this," I says quite cheerful, pointin' to some faint specks of copper pyrites that his sharp eye final locates.

Wade's brow clears a fraction, though of course he ain't got no more idea than a babe'd had that I shows him "fool's gold"; and fixin' his mournful grays on my brassy browns he tries to smile.

"If I hadn't touched off the powder, myself, I would sure think"—his joke is ghastly—"this peanut—salted."

And how I manages to stand the steady, half-questionin' gaze of that despoiled boy without flinchin' I don't know. Probable it don't last but a few seconds, but it seems to me he's been starin' at me an hour 'fore he moves his gray optics. Then he grips his hands and laughs nervous as he bites his lips.

"But of course you didn't do that, and I s'pose it was just a pocket—as you said it might be. Though"—his tone bitters—"it don't make much difference to me, for, if I can't find gold, my money's gone, anyhow."

And, settin' down, he cups his head in his hands, and I see the way he shakes that his feelin's near tear him to pieces. Now, general speaking, I has a heart in me that's considerable harder than the country rock which holds that dry-sobbin' boy, but I admits that just then I ain't breathin' quite natural myself.

"Every cloud has a silver linin', my boy," I chokes final, as I lays my hand comfortin' on his shoulder. And I thinks I knows this lie will be forgive me. "I thinks the Peanut will ultimate pan out a bonanza; and, if I had the dust"—these words are as honest as was ever spoke—"I'd buy back the claim and give you a few thousand for your bargain."

His head is up now, and he's full half-smilin' as he sticks out his honest hand, which I has no business to grip—but does. He holds my crooked fingers a second 'fore sayin' in his boyish, high-tenor voice:

"If you has that much faith in the Peanut, I guess there ain't no real reason for me get entire discouraged yet a while, though if it don't show up right, I won't ever go back to Ohio, for"—he gets to gloomin' again—"a man can't marry on nothin'." He nods his brown head emphatic toward my grizzled straw. "I'd rather shoot myself than live with ma, to be told twenty times a day what a fool I'd made of myself."

"Don't talk such foolishness," I commands playful, as I shakes his arm. "What you got to do is to keep drivin' ahead and," givin' him another shake, "don't you worry, for any day you're liable to strike a big pay-streak, then," slappin' him on the back, "you pulls for the Buckeye State, hitches up with the girl, and lives happy forever after."

It's a funny thing how mere idle words will sometimes hearten a man who's in the dumps, but I apparent uses the right ones for the kid's case, as he's some cheerful when I leaves him. But the showin' of the ledge has complete discouraged me, as it seems to have pinched out total.

"And when he final finds his Peanut ain't got a particle of meat, what'll that heart-sick infant do?" I anxious questions, as I slides down the slope.

Off and on for the next two months I sees the kid, who's tryin' hard to put up a good front, though it's plain he's aged a lot and is livin' on little but hope.

"Ain't struck nothin' yet, but maybe

I will to-morrer," was all he'd say, but he always forced a smile, though his tone was actual pitiful. Then he'd drop his head and poke along slow, like he was all wore out.

But as the days went on, Wade gets more and more haggard; then he takes to buyin' a bottle of whisky every time he gets his mail, which comes regular twice a week. I knows this is a mighty bad sign, and if I'd known where to reach the kid's ma or his girl, I'd a certain wrote a letter advisin' 'em to get here fast as steam'd bring 'em, for I'm afraid he's so plumb despondent that he may take a notion any time to put a hole through his near-crazed head.

One day I meets him in the saloon, and he looks at me with a peculiar light playin' in his reddish dulled gray eyes as his blue lips writhe into what's intended for a smile.

"I've just about made up my mind that I won't strike anything in the Salted Peanut"—I has another shock, but immediate sees his tackin' on of the invidious word is to be understood humorous—"even if I bores a hole clean through the mountain; and"—he rubs his hands as if 'twas cold—"I has practical concluded—to quit; and when I does, the location is yours again; and"—his face twitches alarmin', but he gulps a big drink that steadies him for sayin'—"I wishes you all the luck that I believes you thought I'd have when I buys it from you."

The faith that poor, half-mad kid has in me wrenches the little heart I has to the breakin'-point, for he don't have no more suspicion of my having robbed him than if he was a unborn babe. I'm so broke up that I don't know what to say; and for the next minute I believe if he'd sudden took a opposite view and reached for his gun, that I couldn't have pulled mine on him to save my soul. But I has to speak, and I does my best to wake him from his idiocy by bluff-laughin':

"All right, son! When you go home, I'll try my hand at the Peanut; and when I makes the strike, I'll whack with you, then you and the girl can circle the world if you wants to."

But my play don't help matters a iota, for he don't seem to've heard only my first few words.

"If I ever do go home," he answers, in a feverish, dry voice, "it'll be—in a box." And, shovin' his bottle into his pocket, he walks out.

It don't take me long to make up my mind what to do, and I plants my six feet at the faro-table to get the kid's money or go broke myself. I've still got a thousand of his roll, and I hands it to the dealer, who shoves me ten yellow checks, the limit of the game being a hundred to cases, which I tells him I intends to play.

I ain't goin' into long details 'bout my game, but it's sure some rapid. I'm 'lowed two hundred to doubles, and when I calls the turn on the first deal, I'm a even two thousand winner. I thought for a second of cashin', but the luck's too good. The second emptyin' of the box shows a stand-off. And at the end of the third deal I ain't got a chip left. For a few seconds I has the suicidal impulse considerable strong myself, then I pours in a couple of drinks, which steady my nerves.

"Flat broke," I explains to the bar-keep, as pay for the liquor.

"Quick action for your money, Iowa," grins that unsympathetic bad-whisky dispenser as I head for fresh air.

I'm in sort of a daze till I finds myself in my room at the hotel. Then I opens my grip for some smoking stuff, and there in front of my bulgin' eyes is my dust-sack, which I has total forgot since I gets to handling paper money. My scales show ten ounces, which passes current at eighteen fifty per.

Now probable I'm a rank coward for not playin' that hundred and eighty-five against bank, for, of course, I might have won, but I concludes there's no use tryin' to win four thousand on such a shoe-string. And the next morning the stage is carrying me to steam, as I simple can't stay and see the end of the boy whose purpose I believes to be unalterable. I loafs round the railroad junction a couple of days, then goes

over to the station to take a early, west-bound train.

Just as I puts my foot on the car-step, a smallish, black-eyed woman pops through the door and asks excited:

"Is this where they gets off for Silver?"

I'm that flustered at her astonishin' question that I stares at her total speechless.

"Ain't you got a tongue in your head?" she snaps, some acid.

This brings me to, and, bowin' courteous, I answers affirmative, and offers to carry her grip. But she flares:

"I guess I'll lug it myself, for, as my boy gets robbed of everything he has 'bout the first day he strikes this country, I intend to see that his ma ain't so easy swindled."

'Course, I don't need any introduction to know who the female is, and I instant changes my mind 'bout taking the train.

"I'm just goin' over to Silver myself"—I gives the widder what I deems to be a fetchin' smile—"and, as the stage goes in five minutes, we ain't got long to wait."

Entire mollified, she laughs in a tone that sure pleases my ear.

"That being so, I guess I'll let you take my valise, after all, for it's too heavy for a little woman, though"—her bright eyes glance to my smooth-shaved chin rather admirin', I think—"it's nothing at all for a big, strong man like you."

And I thanks my stars that I've had myself proper trimmed, for the widder is as smooth-skinned and fresh-looking as most girls, and I begins to have visions of passing the rest of my life in quiet and peace on a Ohio farm.

"I thought you was goin' to take the train," coos the kid's ma, as she deft fastens a lock of her dark hair that's only bare sprinkled.

"Oh, no," I grins mendacious, "I was expectin' somebody."

"Well, I know it wasn't me, for even Wade—he's my boy, who I know has been swindled, though he won't admit it in his letters—didn't know it."

She has so much parenthesis and rattles her words so fast that it keeps me busy to catch her full meaning, but I determines that it'll be just as well not to let her know that I am in any way responsible for her son's spoliation.

But when we're in the stage, I tells her I knows Wade and esteems him tremendous, and I'm immediate installed in her good graces. And it ain't long before she tells me 'bout the blue letters the kid sends her and his sweet-heart; and how she'd written him to come straight home and throw away his old Peanut, but that he has absolute refused to obey her, and in his last letter hints at never comin' back—or worse.

"So I just says to Lib—she's the one he's sweet on—I'm a-goin' right out to that awful robber country, where folks is so lawless they carries revolvers"—glancing at mine mighty condemning as I sneaks it round behind me—"and get him home 'fore he dies of mountain fever, or a assassin's bullet, or commits suicide or some other such foolishness, which nobody can tell what a boy like him will do when he ain't got his mother to look after him." And Lib backs me up in my notion—and here I am."

As a single-handed talker, I'm right then and there ready to put what little dust I has on "ma" against the world. And so she rattled on until we reaches camp. We're late, and it's pitch dark and drizzling when we go into the hotel, but that nervy little talkin'-machine is too anxious 'bout the apple of her eye to even wait for a cup of coffee, and insists on starting instant. I tries my best to keep her from going, and tells her I'll hustle up and fetch him.

"No, sir!" she exclaims emphatic. "I knows Wade, and, while he loves me, he's foolish afraid of me, and he might run off or do something worse 'less I go along with you."

So I hunts a rubber coat for her, then with the lantern on one arm and the widder hangin' on the other, I starts up the slippery path. There's quite a few times that I deems it necessary to put my arm around her plump

waist to keep her from falling; then I finds I ain't thinkin' so much about her rapid-fire talking action as I was. The rain thins as we rise, and at last we see a light in the boy's cabin.

"That's the place, just half a mile ahead of us," I tells her, and, as she fastens her eager black eyes on the little beam, her step quickens, and I hears a faint-whispered:

"Thank God, I'm in time!"

And, while I ain't ever been over-pious, I can't help repeatin' to myself her words, and making them my own.

About a hundred yards from the cabin we can see into the window, and there sets the kid at his rough board table, with his head buried in his hands. From this on he's in plain sight, and several times we sees him press his fingers tight against his forehead, as if he's in distress of some kind. Then I sudden notices that his gun is lying at his elbow, and the next second he takes it in his hand and turns the muzzle to his temple.

I'm struck dumb total, but his mother sees it, too, and her awful scream, piercing to the eternal snow above us, tells the heart agony of the woman who thought her boy about to die by his own hand.

But she saves him. His hand drops and his head raises quick, then her voice reaches his ears again. The next flash Wade springs through the door, and gathers the widder in his arms, who cries hysterical as he carries her to the cabin.

The kid may have seen me, but I don't believe he really sensed who I was. Anyhow, he shuts the door behind them, and I innate knows that callers ain't expected for a hour or so, anyway. So to get out of the wet—for I makes up my mind not to leave till I bids the widder good night, as I feels that I've made a impression, and wants to press the play—I hikes for the

tunnel, which is the first time I've been in it since Wade so mournful asks me to look it over.

I plants myself just inside, and stares for a while at the firefly lights of the camp; then, to stretch the cramps out of my long legs, I strolls on back, kind of idle swingin' my lantern along the walls. When I gets to the face of the vein, I examines it careful, but there ain't a sign of gold to be seen. But as I turns to leave, I accidental throws the light to the top of the hangin' wall, and what I sees puts my heart in my throat. The last shot has broke into a cross ledge trendin' from the north.

And I'm a mighty excited man, for it only takes a old-timer 'bout two minutes to know he's standin' in what'll be one of the richest mines ever shown up. Gold? No; but about as near solid silver as was ever seen in mines. And that's sayin' a lot, for the Silver King—just half a mile to the north—is what first makes the camp famous and gives it its name.

Now I s'pose I'm 'possessed by a worse devil than abides in the average man, for it immediate begins whisperin' that if I keeps my mouth shut I has the Peanut to myself, as it's a sure thing the widder'll lead Wade out of the wilderness by the first stage. And for some minutes it's more'n even money that the kid's lost out after unknowin' opening a bonanza; but my brow-beat old conscience rises up in earnest this time and roars in my ear:

"You robber of orphan and widder, if you got any man left in you, knock out some of that white stuff and take it to the boy you comes mighty near murderin'!"

And I'm weak, and yields. But in so doin', I not only loses a fortune, but I learns from bitter experience what my stepson means when he says:

"You don't know ma!"

THE MASKERS

*By Charles
Neville Buck*



THE single pointer stretched rigid; one foreleg stiffly raised, sensitive nostrils a-quiver, tail unbending as a poker. Away to the right the russet timber-line, splotted here and there with scarlet and yellow, bespoke the course of the fence. Beyond that, somewhere under the languorous haze of the Great Spirit's peace-pipe, where it hung lazy on the horizon, sounded the far popping of shotguns.

There came a startling whir of drumming wings; the air seemed full of escaping brown shapes; four reports rang from their two guns, and the pointer, leaping high out of the statuesqueness of his wide-awake trance, went bounding joyously over the stubble.

"Three birds," commented Benton. The girl nodded.

The man gazed admiringly at his field-companion as she stood lithely upright like some Indian maid trained for the trail rather than the wigwam; lips eagerly parted, eyes intent on the scattering birds.

She made a vivid picture as she paused on the ridge against the blue of the sky, slender and splendidly free of poise, clad in red-flannel shirt, short corduroy skirt, canvas leggings, and broad-brimmed felt hat.

Her eyes still on the settling quail, she reloaded and snapped the breech-lock, then started after the dog.

The man gathered in the fallen birds and hastened after her.

In the stretching acres of stubble they came upon a small grove, where under a scarlet maple that reared itself skyward all aflame, and under the festooning profusion of wild-grape, a fallen beech-trunk offered an inviting seat. The girl halted and grounded arms. She smiled guiltily.

"I may be a poor sportsman," she declared, "but I know beauty, and I tarry at the oasis. I grow tired easily these days. You go on, though, and kill little birds, and when you have killed them all you can come back here for me."

He stacked their guns against a tree and spread his canvas hunting-coat across the log. "I have killed just sufficient birds," he declared. "I am no game-hog."

She sat leaning back so that she could see, through the tracery of leafage that the frost had turned to flame, the blue patches of afternoon sky. Her eyes clouded and the corners of her mouth drooped, while between her brows appeared the delicate furrow that came when she was troubled.

The man stood near her. He followed her eyes when they tired of the bright colors and wandered wearily to the more restful tones of mist-wrapped hills.

"You wear that expression too much these latter days," he said slowly, studying her face.

She looked up quickly. "Do you find

that remarkable?" she demanded. "Do you think the drama I etched for you promises much for its heroine?"

"The drama you etched for me," he repeated, as though stubbornly refusing to accept an obvious conclusion, "has a last act, as yet unacted, and in it you and I——" He paused.

With a sorrowful smile she shook her head.

"The last act is what I dread," she replied, with a shudder.

He seated himself at her feet and looked up. He framed a question, then hesitated, fearing the answer. Finally he spoke, controlling his voice with an effort.

"Cara," he questioned, "how long have I?"

Her eyes widened as if with terror. "A very—very little time, dear," she said. "It frightens me to think of it. Then—then—the open sea with Arcady lost back of the horizon and nothing to point to it but the foaming wake astern. Do you realize it?" She leaned forward and laid a hand on each of his shoulders. "Just one week more, and after that on the other side of the ocean I shall look out to sea when the sun sinks, red and sullen, into the leaden waters and think of—of Arcady—and you."

"Don't, Cara!" He seized the two hands that rested lightly on his shoulders and went on talking fast and vehemently. "Listen! I love you—that is not a unique thing. You love me—that is a miracle. Yonder—somewhere—where the guns are popping—is the Count Pagratide who loves you, and others, whom I shall not pause to enumerate, who love you. Fewer of us than you can count on the fingers of one hand know that you are Cara Carstow for purposes of convenience only; that he is the Count Pagratide only for purposes of disguise. In the story-book world a fairy godmother turns the heroine into a princess, and all is happy. And in life you turn out to be a princess from a little souvenir principality, and he a princeling from another little principality, and because of that, our lives must go to wreck, and your mar-

riage must be arranged by certain ponderous heads that rest uneasy under crowns. Don't you see the situation is ludicrous—intolerable?"

She nodded. "But what are we going to do about it?" she questioned simply.

He came up behind her and, dropping on one knee, put his arms around her. "Cara, dear—if I could find a way! Listen to me! Suppose I could be a magician, suppose I could arrange everything else, would you ever regret the losing of the throne of Galavia? Would you ever wish you had chosen otherwise?"

"Do you think it necessary to ask me that?" she said very softly.

"No," he conceded. "I know all that means nothing to you—the little sliver of territory that my geography teacher never even remembered to tell me belonged in the atlas! That little back lot of Europe whose existence is not even marked with a red spot on the map!" He paused as though to take breath for renewed philippics. "Because"—he spoke with a sudden access of confidence, almost boastful—"you sit there on your throne. I am here an anarchist and I am going to overthrow the throne. It stands for medievalism, I for progress. In short, I am bigger than you, and I sha'n't think of letting you be his queen in Galavia."

She leaned back so that she might look into his eyes. "I wish there was a way," she mused.

Then, as he bent above her, he stooped suddenly and kissed the drooping lips with a resentful sense of the monstrous injustice of a scheme of things wherein such lips could droop.

She bent her head, and, drawing back, pushed him away.

"No, no, no!" she cried. "You must not! I've got to be Queen of Galavia—I've got to be his wife." Then, in a quick, half-frightened tone: "Yet when you are with me I can't help it. It's wicked to love you—and I do."

He smiled through the misery of his own frown. "Am I so bad as that?" he questioned.

"You are so bad"—she suddenly

caught his hands in hers and slowly shook her head—"that I don't trust myself on the same side of the road with you. You must go across and sit on that opposite side." She bent forward and lightly kissed his forehead. "That's a kiss before exile—now go."

He measured the distance with disapproving eyes. "That must be fifteen feet away," he protested, "and my arms are not a yard long." He stretched them out, viewing them ruefully.

"Go!" she repeated, with sternness.

He obeyed slowly, his face growing sullen.

"If I am to stay here until I recant what I said about your kingdom and throne, I'll—I'll—" He cast about for a sufficiently rebellious sentiment. "I'll stay here until I rot in my chains." He raised his hands and shook imaginary manacles. "Clink! Clink! Clink!" he added dramatically.

"You are being punished for being too fascinating to a poor little fool princess who played hookey and who doesn't want to go back to school." She talked on with recovered levity. "As for the kingdom"—once more her eyes became wistful—"you may say what you like of that. You can't possibly hate it as much as I. There is no anarchist that screams his loyalty to the red flag or devises infernal machines who hates all thrones as much as the one small girl who must needs be Queen of Galavia. No, *lese-majesté* is not the fault for which you are being punished."

Across a half-mile of stubble and woodland floated a rapid sequence of shotgun reports. She was sitting with her chin resting on one hand, elbow on knee. Suddenly, as though from a blow, she winced and the expression of pain came to her lips and eyes, deepening the furrow between her brows. They both knew that the only member of the hunting-party at Idle Times, the only guest at Van Bristow's estate who was shooting a repeating shotgun, was the Count Pagratide, whose title and superscription, when he left the States and the comfort of an incognito behind him, would again be Karyl, Crown

Prince of Galavia. In the bright interval of her holiday freedom, he stood as the foreshadowing of her future, with Colonel von Ritz, of sphinxlike visage watching from under level brows out of those singularly steady eyes, which nothing escaped. And through those seemingly expressionless pupils she knew that not only Von Ritz, colonel of cavalry, but the crowned heads looked on with the unbiased coldness of policy, caring only that the moves on the international chess-board made for certain results in Europe.

"Cara," said the man softly, "may I come over now?"

She turned to him a face sorely distressed, and then impulsively held out both arms with the gesture of a child who has seen a fancied ogre. In a moment he was on his knees at her feet, his arms about her, and was pouring out in the low, tense voice of a final plea, his protests. He argued passionately, though it was needless to speak loudly, for her ear lay, like something carved out of pink Capri coral, close to his lips and her hair brushed his forehead as he talked.

"Cara, you may have been born into the misfortune of royalty, but slavery does not exist here—royal slavery as little as any other. I belong to you—you belong to me. Is that true?"

She nodded.

"Very good. Destiny is stronger than the paretic councils of little inbred kings. Why"—his voice rose hopefully, almost cheerfully once more—"why, Cara, I can get one good husky Methodist preacher who can do in five minutes what I hardly think your royalties can undo—ever."

"Oh, don't!" she stopped him, with a palm over his lips. "Don't tempt me, Sir Gray Eyes. I know all that. I know it. Don't you realize that the longer the flight into the open blue of the skies, above the top plumes of the highest trees, the harder the return to a gilt cage? Don't you know that the longer I listen to the winds across the seas, the more bitter to return to my prison? But, dearest"—she stood away from him with her hands on his shoul-

ders and looked him sadly but unwaveringly in the eyes—"there is such a thing as keeping one's parole. I must go back, unless I am held by a force stronger than I. I must go back. I have been here almost too long."

The man picked up the guns and together they strolled back slowly across the fields toward the tall chimneys that told of Idle Times, where the house of Van Bristow luxuriously spread its brick and terra-cotta walls and ramifications over lawns and gardens, dedicated to hospitable entertainment.

It was at dinner that evening that Mrs. Van announced to her guests that "by request of one who should be nameless," punctuating her pledge of secrecy with a pronounced glance at Benton, there would be a masquerade affair on the evening before Cara's departure for New York, an informal sort of frolic in fancy dress.

On the next morning ensued a hegira from the place, the object whereof was guarded with the most diplomatic deception and secrecy.

"Why this unanimous desertion?" demanded Van indignantly from the head of the table when it began to develop that an exodus impended. "Do your appetites crave the stimulus of city cooking?"

Benton nodded his head. "Singular," he commented, studying his grapefruit with the air of an oracle gazing into crystal. "There, for example, is Colonel Centress who will probably tell you that he has had an imperative summons to confer with his brokers and——"

He paused, and the ancient beau across the table nodded affirmation.

"Quite so. How did you guess?" he inquired. "Never talk business at table, of course, but this is a mysterious flurry in stocks—quite a mysterious flurry."

"Quite so," continued Benton. "Nevertheless, if you were to shadow the gallant colonel in Manhattan to-day he would probably lead you to a costuming tailor, where he would be fitted with Roman toga or crusader's mail."

"I understand, Colonel von Ritz," suggested Mrs. Porter-Woodleigh sol-

emnly, with a malicious glance at the tall foreigner whose emotionless face was a constant irritation to her exuberant vivacity, "that you are to impersonate a Polar bear."

The Galavian smiled deep in his eyes only; his lips were sober. "I shall only remain myself," he said. "I am allowed to be a looker-on in Vienna."

"What are you going to town for?" demanded Mrs. Van, looking accusingly at Benton, as that gentleman rose from the table.

"I should say," he laughingly responded, "that I am going to complete final arrangements for getting the *Isis* into commission, but nobody would believe me. You are all becoming so diplomatic of late."

Von Ritz glanced up casually. "There is one very dangerous diplomacy—one very difficult to become accustomed to," he commented. "I allude to the American diplomacy of frankness."

"The *Isis*? I have never seen your yacht," mused Cara. "And yet you are allowing me to cross on a steamer."

"If she could be put in shape so soon," declared Benton regretfully, glancing from Von Ritz to Pagratide, "I should shanghai Mrs. Van for a chaperon and give a party to Europe. Unfortunately I can't get her ready for sea in time. Unless," he added hopefully, "Miss Carstow can postpone her sailing-day?"

When Benton had straightened his car out for the run to the city, and the road began to slip away under his tires, he turned to McGuire, his chauffeur.

"McGuire," he inquired, "where is the runabout?"

"At Idle Times, sir," responded McGuire. "You loaned it to Mr. Bristow to fill up the garage."

"I remember. Now, listen!" And as Benton talked a slow grin spread across the visage of Mr. McGuire, a grin that was eloquent of satisfaction, and that told of some enterprise that appealed to the venturesome soul of the auditor.

When the conversation ended the chauffeur brought his right gauntlet

to the goggle-surmounted vizor of his cap. "My compliments to Commodore Benton, sir," he said, "an' Captain McGuire says, when you are ready go ahead an' shoot."

In the city Benton was a busy man, though his visit to the costumer's was brief. As he came out of the place he fancied he caught a glimpse of Von Ritz, but the view was so fleeting that he decided his eyes had deceived him, and this, he told himself, was the more probable since he had himself selected a rather remote shop, recommended by Mr. McGuire, whereas Von Ritz, even had his assertion that he was not to masquerade been made to deceive, would probably have selected some more fashionable purveyor of disguises.

The few days of the last week raced by, with all the charm of sky and field that the magic of Indian summer can lavish, and for Benton and Cara, with the sense of a fast-slipping hope and a forward-marching and relentless doom. Outwardly Cara set a pace for vivacious and care-free enjoyment which left Mrs. Porter-Woodleigh, the "semi-professional light-hearted lady," as O'Barreton declared her, "to trail along in the ruck." Alone with Benton, there was always the furrow between the brows and the gaze upon the mystery of the haze-touched sky-line, but Pagratide and Von Ritz were vigilant, and tête-à-têtes between them were brief.

As the kaleidoscope of the first dance on the evening of the masquerade shifted its medley of color, three men stood by the wide door scanning the human chiaroscuro with watchful eyes.

One of the three was fantastically arrayed as a cannibal chief, in brown fleshings, with cuffs upon his ankles, gaudy decorations about his neck, and huge rings in nose and ears. The second man was a Bedouin. From the black horsehair circlet on his temples the turban-scarf of the camel-driver of the Lybian Desert fell to his shoulders. He was wrapped in a brown cashmere cloak that dropped away straight to his ankles. Shaggy brows ran in an unbroken line from temple to temple, and a fierce mustache and beard masked his

lower face. His cheek-bones and forehead showed as dark as leather, and as his eyes searchingly raked the crowds, he fingered a string of Moslem prayer-beads.

The third man was conspicuous in ordinary dress. Save for the star of the Order of Takavo, suspended by a crimson ribbon on his shirt-front, and the Cross of Galavia, on the left lapel of his coat, there was no break in the black and white scheme of his evening clothes. Von Ritz had told the truth. He was not disguised. He stood, his arms folded on his breast, towering above the Fiji Islander, possibly a quarter inch taller than the Bedouin, with a half-amused smile in his steady eyes—the smile of unwavering brows and dispassionately steady mouth-line.

The cannibal chief waved his hand. "Bright the lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men," he declaimed, in a disguised voice; then scowled about him villainously, remembering that man-eating and affability are incompatible qualities.

The Bedouin slightly inclined his head. "Allahu Akbar!" he responded, in a soft voice.

A milkmaid drifted by and paused before the head-hunter. "Hath music no charms to soothe thy savage breast?" she demanded, and in a moment the two were off in the maze of the two-step.

Suddenly the Bedouin commenced a hurried and zigzag course across the crowded floor. The dark eyes of Colonel von Ritz indolently followed.

Through a low-silled window a girl had just entered, carrying herself with the untroubled freedom of some wild thing, erect, poised from the waist, rhythmic in motion. Her walk was like the scansion of good verse. The Bedouin caught the grace before the ensemble of costume met his eye. It was a harmony.

She wore a silk skirt to the ankles, and about her waist and hips the plaid sash of the Spanish gipsy, tightly knotted, and falling at its tasseled ends. Her arms were bare from the elbow, though gay with bracelets; her hair fell from her forehead and temples and

dropped over her shoulders in two long plaits, wound at the end with bright ribbons. Her fingers idly tapped castanets. A tall monk, whose military bearing gave the lie to his cassock, a Spanish grandee, and a fool in motley, saw her at the same moment and started to intercept her, but with a slide a quarter way across the floor the Bedouin was first, and before the others had come up, they were drifting away in the tide of dancers.

"Allah is good to me—Flamencine," whispered the camel-driver, as he drew her close to avoid a careless dancer.

"Why Flamencine?" demanded a carefully altered voice, from which, however, the music had not been eliminated.

"Don't you remember?" The Arab stole a covert, identifying glance down to the tip of one ear that showed from under its masking of brown hair—an ear of ridiculously small dimensions that looked as though it were chiseled from pink Capri coral.

"There was a gipsy maiden within the forest green,
There was a gipsy maiden who shook a tambourine.

The stars of night had not the face,
The woodland wind had not the grace,
Of Flamencine."

Then the music stopped, and with its silence came the monk, the clown, the grandee, and others.

It was not yet unmasking time when a Bedouin led a gipsy maiden from Andalusia into the otherwise deserted library, lighted only by the blazing logs in the open fireplace.

When they were alone he turned anxiously to the girl.

"Dear," he asked, "how are you?"

She gazed at the flickering logs. "I should think you would know," she said wearily. Then, with a mirthless laugh, she spread both hands toward the logs. "I see so much that's festive ahead—I can see it all there in the fire." She rose, shook her head restlessly. Then she tore off the mask she had been wearing.

He pushed a chair forward for her.

"Whoever heard of a gipsy maiden

sitting in a leather chair? It's more like—like some effete princess."

She dropped to the Persian rug with the grace of a curtsy, and gathering her knees in her hands sat looking into the dying blaze. "And for a few minutes I am the gipsy girl."

"And," he said, dropping cross-legged to the rug at her side, "when the caravan halts at eventide, and prayers have been said facing Mecca, and the camels kneel, grunting, we, the gipsies of the desert, do not sit in chairs." He swayed slightly toward her, dropping his voice low, and as the soft touch of her shoulder brushed him and electrified him his cashmere-draped arms surrounded her. The vagrant maiden of Andalusia and the caravan-driver of Africa sat gazing together at the pictures in the ashes of the logs.

"Cara," he went on in a voice of pent-up earnestness, "we be nomads—we two, and the scarlet of the maples can shake us like the cry of bugles going by." Come away, gipsy maiden, let us follow out our destinies where gipsy blood calls us, in the desert, the jungle, where you say—as idle and as free as the birds. Suppose"—he paused and, with one outstretched arm, pointed to the fire—"suppose that to be a camp-fire, what do you see in the coals?"

"I have already told you," she said wearily. "I see a throne, a life with all the confining littleness of a prison, with none of the bigness and breadth of an empire. I see the giving up of what I love. I see petty intrigue, scandal, and year upon year of purple desolation. Purple is the color of mourning and royalty."

She fell silent, and he spoke slowly.

"I see the desert, many-hued as a huge opal with the setting of the sun. I see the flickering of camp-fires and the palm-fringe of the oasis. I see the minarets of a mosque, and the long booths of the bazaars. I smell the scent of the perfume-seller's stall, the heavy sweetness of attar of roses. I see a mountain-pass and a mule-train crawling over it. I see the paths that go around the world. Which of our pictures do you prefer?"

She gave a pained, low cry, and buried her face passionately in his shoulder. "Oh, you know, you know!" she cried, in a piteous voice. "And you love me, yet you tempt me to break my word. If I could do it and be freed of the responsibility! If a miracle could work itself!"

He rose and lifted her; then as she stood clinging to him he said: "I ask your forgiveness—and one boon. Slip away with me and give me an hour with you."

"He will find me. Pagratide and Von Ritz will find me," she said helplessly. "They won't let us be alone for long."

"No," he replied. "It is not cold and the moon is brilliant. It is the last real moon for me. Come in my car for a while."

"You must not make love to me," she stipulated. "I am going to try to get my face properly composed—and if you make love to me, I can't. Besides, when you make love I'm rather afraid of you." Then she added suddenly: "Yes, do."

He laughed. "Destiny says I must make love to you, and I obey Destiny," he responded.

Outside, she asked to be left by the bridge while he went for his car. She wished to be alone for a moment. So after five minutes' argument he turned and started alone to the driveway at the corner of the house, where McGuire, pursuant to previous orders, was to be waiting with the machine. It had been a scant hour since he had slipped away from the dancers and consulted with McGuire in the shadow of the wall, instructing the driver in his duties. McGuire was to wait with the machine ready, until Benton came, then was to run the car to the point where a lady entered it. He was at that point to leave, without words, return, and follow in the runabout as a reserve in case of trouble, by a certain circuitous route, to a certain point thirty miles distant, keeping just close enough to hold the first car in sight. McGuire had repeated the program and understood it perfectly. Yet now McGuire was missing,

together with one very necessary motor-car.

Now as Benton stood boiling with wrath at the miscarriage of his plans, he fancied he heard the muffled, soft song of his engines beyond the turn where the road circled the house. He bent and held a lighted match close to the gravel. On a muddied spot he found the easily recognizable tread of his tires. The car had been there. For the sake of speed he ran to the garage near-by and took a swift look at the runabout. It was waiting, and, thanks to the God of Machines, it would start on compression. He jumped to the driver's seat and started. Far away—about as far as the bridge, he calculated, he heard one short blast of a horn.

Just before the last turn brought him to the bridge where he should meet Cara, he noticed a man hurrying toward him on foot, and recognized McGuire. Totally mystified, he brought the machine to a stop.

"Get in, you infernal blockhead!" he growled. "Tell me about it as we go. I'm in a hurry."

But McGuire performed strangely. He clapped one hand to his forehead and looked at his employer out of large, wild eyes. "Am I dippy? My God! Am I dippy?" he exclaimed over and over in a low, trembling voice.

"Get in, damn you! Explain yourself!" Benton ordered.

"It's weird," declared McGuire, mastering himself, however, enough to climb to his seat. "Why, sir," he ran on, talking fast now after the first shock. "I've made a fool mistake, or else I'm crazy. I waited at the place you said. You—or your ghost—came and took his seat, and waved his hand. I started the car for the bridge. He did not speak, but at the bridge he jumped out. He was you—and yet you are here—same size—some costume—same beard—even the same beads around the neck."

They had almost reached the bridge and were slowing down, when Benton, scanning the long, empty road in the moonlight, cried in a voice of wild

alarm, grasping for the first time the real conception of the facts. "Cara! Good God, where is she?"

The chauffeur leaned over and shouted in his ear. "I'm telling you, sir. The lady's in that other car—with that other edition of you. And, sir—beggin' your pardon—they're beatin' it like hell!"

Benton gave an inarticulate roar, and his only answer was to throw forward indicator and pedal so suddenly that the car seemed to rise from the ground and shiver before it settled again, then shot forward and reeled crazily into a speed never intended for a turnpike road at night.

The moonlight fell on a gray streak of a car, driven by a maniac with a scarf blowing back from a turban over two wildly gleaming eyes, while a second maniac hung out grinning with the sheer enjoyment of speed, on one side and the other, as the car flung itself headlong around the angles of a road-way none too straight.

A short distance ahead another car was traveling on its top speed, and the lone owl from a stark sycamore branch at the roadside blinked his great green eyes as it flashed past. In it rode a Bedouin of almost identical appearance, and with him a gypsy girl.

Back at Idle Times a Capuchin monk, wandering apart from the dancers in consonance with the austere proclaiming of his garb, was studying in the conservatory the frivolous gamboling of a school of fountain gold-fish. He looked up scowling to take a note from a servant.

"Colonel von Ritz said to hand this to the gentleman masquerading as a monk," explained the man.

"Von Ritz!" growled the monk. "He annoys me."

He impatiently tore open the letter and scanned it. His brows contracted in astonished mystification, then slowly his eyes narrowed and kindled.

The scrawl ran:

YOUR HIGHNESS: If you see neither Mr. Benton, masquerading as an Arab, her highness, the princess, nor myself in ten minutes from the time of receiving this, take a car.

My servant, who is, as you know, my orderly, will be ready to act as your chauffeur. Follow the main road to the second village. Turn to the right and follow to the small bay, where you will find me or an explanation. I have been conducting certain investigations. The affair is urgent and touches plans of great import to Europe and to your highness.

When Cara, waiting at the bridge, had seen the car flash up, a bearded Bedouin at the wheel, she had leaped lightly to the seat beside him, without waiting for the machine to come to a full stop, then she had thrown herself back luxuriously with a sigh of satisfaction, and had said only: "Drive me fast."

For a long time she lay back drinking, in intoxicating drafts, the spiced night air, frosted only enough to give flavor. There was no necessity for speech, and above, the stars glittered lavishly, despite the brighter effulgence of the moon.

Finally she murmured, half aloud and almost contentedly: "Who knows but the world may end to-night?"

Above the throbbing explosions of the cylinders that had already done ten miles the man beside her caught the voice but missed the words. He bent forward.

"I beg your pardon?" he inquired politely.

At the voice, she started violently, and both hands came to her heart in a spasmodic movement. He opened the throttle a notch and carried the car around an ugly rut.

"Don't be alarmed, your highness," he said, in the cold, evenly modulated voice, which though pitched low carried clearly above the noises of the car. "I may call you 'your highness,' may I not?" he added. "We are quite alone, you know, or do you prefer that I still respect your incognita?"

The girl's eyes blazed upon him until he could feel their intense focusing, though he kept his own straight ahead on the road. Finally she mastered her anger enough to speak.

"Colonel von Ritz," she commanded, "you will take me back at once!" She

drew herself as far away from him as the space on the seat permitted.

"Your highness' commands are supreme." The man spoke in the same even voice. "I intend taking your highness back—when it is safer for your highness to go back."

He turned the car suddenly to the right and sped along the narrower road that led away from the main thoroughfare.

"You will take me back now. I had not supposed that to a gentleman—" Her voice choked into silence and her eyes filled with angry tears.

"Your highness misunderstands," he said coldly. "I obey the throne. Some day if I live long enough to serve it in another reign, your highness will be your majesty. Yet even then will your commands be no more supreme to me—no more sacred—than now. But even then your highness—"

"Call me Miss Carstow," she interrupted passionately. "I will have my freedom while I may."

"Yet even then, Miss Carstow," he calmly resumed, "when danger threatens you or your throne, I shall take such means as I can to foil that danger, as I do now. Even though"—for a moment the cold, metallic evenness left his voice and a human note stole into his words—"even though the reward be contempt."

She did not answer.

"Your high—Miss Carstow"—Von Ritz spoke with a deferential finality—"believe me, some things are inevitable."

Suddenly the car stopped.

The girl made a movement as though she would rise, but the man's arm quietly stretched itself across before her, not touching her, but forming an effective barrier.

She did not speak, but her eyes flashed scornful indignation. For the first time he was able to return her gaze directly, and as she looked into the unflinching gray pupils, under the level brows, there was a momentary combat and her own eyes dropped. He sat for a moment with his arm outstretched.

"Your highness—" he spoke as impersonally as a judge ruling from the bench—"I must remind you again that I am your escort to-night only in order that some one else may not be. What his plans were I need not now say, but I know, and it became my duty to thwart him. It is for that that I have acquainted myself with his movements, his intentions, and his preparations; that I have even counterfeited his masquerade and stolen his car. There are bigger things at stake than individual wishes. I stand for the throne."

He paused, and she found herself watching with a strange fascination the almost marblelike steadiness of his body and face, save for the movement of his lips. The moon was brilliant, and the silver threads of the pattern woven into his turban-scarf caught the glint.

"Some day—perhaps soon," he went on, the arm unmoved, "you will be Queen of Galavia." She shuddered. "You can then strip away my epaulets if you choose. For the moment, however, I must regard you as a prisoner of war and ask your parole, as a gentleman and an officer, not to leave the car for ten minutes. I must investigate."

She hesitated, with her chin thrown up and her eyes blazing; then, with a glance at the unmoving arm, she bowed her assent. "That is all I promise," she said, moving back into the tonneau and settling herself to wait.

He tested coil and carbureter. "That is sufficient, I think," he responded, with a half-smile.

As he moved industriously about the machine she spoke, and her voice had a quality of the cold metal of determination, blended with very bitter misery. "If, Colonel von Ritz, I have, as you say, the power to ruin you, I warn you now I shall be so desperately, hideously unhappy as queen of your country, that I may find solace in revenge."

He bowed, and bent again to his task of diagnosis. With a final twist of the crank, he succeeded in starting the motor, which ran with noisy ineffectiveness, one cylinder missing sadly.

"The fact that this machine went out

with lamps unlighted, and that I have no matches in this garb, necessitates a trip to that farmhouse up the hillside where the light shines through the trees. Will your highness regard the same parole in effect? Yes? I thank your highness, I shall not be long."

The girl for answer honked the horn in several loud blasts, and he stopped, with a murmured apology, to silence it, throwing the bulb to one side.

He turned and took his way through the woods statuesquely upright and spectral in his long Arab cloak.

Benton and McGuire had passed the crossing when McGuire's quick ear caught the familiar discord of the French horn and brought his hand to his employer's arm. The car was stopped, and McGuire, by match-light, examined the road with its frosty mud unmarked by fresh automobile tracks, save those running back from their own tires.

The runabout wheeled and slipped back cautiously, watchful for byways. At the crossroads McGuire was out again.

"Good, sir," he reported. "The other edition went this track."

Back in the side lane stood a car in which a girl sat alone solemnly indignant. The runabout slipped up so silently that she did not hear its approach above the noise of her own machine.

"Cara!" Benton was standing on the step. His voice was freighted with solicitude and anxiety. "Cara!" he repeated. "What does it mean?"

"I don't know," she responded coolly. "Something seems to be broken."

"I don't mean that." McGuire was already investigating. "What does it mean?"

She sighed wearily.

"When I foolishly agreed to play *Juliet* to your *Romeo*," she said, and her tones were frigid, "I did not know that your *Romeo* was really only a *Dromio*. The other edition of you"—he flinched at the words, and McGuire choked violently—"is back there, I believe, looking for matches."

"She's all right, sir," announced McGuire, in triumph. "She'll travel now."

"Travel, then!" snapped Benton. "Leave the runabout here. The other gentleman may prefer not to walk home."

As he swung himself into the tonneau, the chauffeur had already seized the wheel and the car was swinging around. Far back up the hillside there was a crashing of underbrush, and a spectral figure, struggling with the unaccustomed lengths of a Bedouin robe, emerged from the woods into the open, and halted in momentary astonishment.

"I believe I am under parole—to the other *Dromio*—not to run away," she suggested wearily.

"Oh, that's all right, I have no treaty with Galavia," replied the gentleman pleasantly. "Hit her up a bit, McGuire."

He took one of the hands that lay wearily in her lap and she lay back in the leather upholstery and said nothing. Finally he bent nearer.

"Dearest," he said. There was no answer.

"Dearest," he whispered again.

She only turned her head and smiled forgiveness.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm so tired, so tired of all of it," she sighed. "Don't you see? I wish some one bigger than I am would take me away to some place where they had never heard of a crown—somewhere beyond the Milky Way."

He took her in his arms, and the spangle-crowned gipsy head fell heavily on his shoulder. She stretched up both arms toward the stars, and the moonlight glinted from the gilt bracelets.

"Somewhere beyond the Milky Way," she murmured, then collapsed like a tired child, and lay still.

"Dearest," he whispered, "I'll tell you a secret." He paused and listened to the rhythmic cylinders throbbing a racing pulse; he looked back at the white band of road that was being flung out behind them like thread from a falling spool. He held her fiercely to him and kissed her. "I'll tell you a secret. You are being stolen. The *Isis* is waiting in a little bay, and there is steam in her engines, and a chaplain

on board. If it's necessary I shall run up the skull and cross-bones at her masthead. Do you hear?" Then, with a less piratical voice: "Dearest, I love you."

She looked up drowsily into his eyes. "You don't have to be such a boa-constrictor," she suggested. "You are not a cave-man, after all, you know, if you are taking a lady without asking her." Then she whispered: "I'm going to sleep." And she did.

As the car at last swept around the curve and took the shore road, Benton caught, far away as yet, the red and green glint of tiny port and starboard lights on the bridge of the *Isis*, and the long ruby and emerald shafts quivering beneath in the calm waters of the bay. As the low yellow moon swung down the midnight sky the trim silhouette of the yacht stood out, and a low sigh of relief escaped him, for he noted the smoke drifting from her stacks in token of banked fires in the furnace, and men stripped for action in her stoke-hold.

She awoke on the deck of the *Isis*, after sleeping through the rowboat stage of the journey, and gazed wonderingly about.

"Is it a dream?" she asked.

"It is a dream to me, but I am going to make it real," he responded.

She went to the rail. He followed her.

"I was so tired," she said, "I hardly knew where the dream began and the reality ended. Ah, I wish the dream could come true!"

She turned toward him. "It all seems like a fairy-story—but fairy-stories aren't ever true, are they?" she asked.

"This is to be a true story, Cara," he whispered.

She shook her head. "Stand still!" she commanded.

He was bending forward with his elbows on the rail. Suddenly with something like a stifled sob, she caught his head in both arms and held him close, so close that he heard her heart pounding and her breath coming with a spasmodic gasp. He put out his arms, but she held him off.

"No, no; don't touch me now—only listen!"

He waited a moment before she spoke again.

"You said I was your prisoner." Her voice dropped in a tremor as though the tears would prevail, but she steadied it and went on. "I wish I were. Always I am your prisoner, but I must go back. It is because it is written."

He straightened up and took her in his arms. "I know how you have settled it," he said, "but I have stolen you. The *Isis* will sail in a few minutes more. You love me—you will marry me. It is now beyond your power, your responsibility."

"No, it is not. I am not afraid of you," she said softly, "and I will not marry you—but I love you—I love you!"

"You mean that if I hold you my prisoner you will still not be my wife?" he asked incredulously.

Slowly she nodded her head.

The soft cadence of the ship's bell floated down with the voice of the man in the crow's-nest. "One o'clock and all's well."

Benton looked up at the mast and ground his teeth. "That is a lie," he said, in a changed voice.

"Boat ahoy!" came a voice.

"They have come for you," he said, speaking as through a fog.

At the gangway two figures came over the side, and slowly followed the first officer forward. One was a Capuchin monk bearing himself rigidly; at his side strode a Bedouin, bedraggled but erect and military of bearing. The original Arab turned with a sudden sag of the shoulders and looked helplessly out at the path of silver that stretched from the water just below to the moon now close to the horizon. He waved one hand in a gesture of submission and despair, and stood silent.

The gipsy girl, standing near, took a sudden step forward and stood close to him as the others approached.

"They may take me back if they wish to, now," she said. "But they shall find me like this!" And she flung both arms about his neck and kissed him.

IN AMBUSH

By Marie Van Vorst

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

"Bill" Flanders, a member of a mining camp in the Klondike, is denounced as a highwayman and general bad man by young Scranton, who has been a lover of Flanders' wife. The next morning Scranton is found dead in his cabin, and Flanders, although hitherto a general favorite, and his wife are driven from camp. Some years later Sydney Adair, a fabulously rich American, turns up in Egypt, leads a brilliant cavalry charge in the Sudan, and saves the life of a young English officer, Captain Maccerdene. A man named Moody witnesses the charge and writes to a Robert Scranton in Cairo that it was Bill Flanders who led it. Then Moody dies. Maccerdene's cousin and betrothed, Helena Desprey, with her aunt, comes to the point on the Nile where the young officer lies wounded. She and Adair meet and Helena falls in love with the American.

PART III.

CHAPTER X.



HERE had been nothing in Adair's code of honor hitherto to prevent his running away with another man's wife, or to keep him from taking pleasure where he found it. But there was something that rose up mightily, as all feelings rose up mightily when they stirred at all, to prevent him running away with Helena Desprey.

As the days went on, he grew to think of her, not as a young girl, although she was young, but a woman of appealing loveliness. Her Southern voice, the turn of her head, the gestures of her slender hands, her eyes that seemed to bless a man when they rested on him, her fresh sweet lips, her gracious smile, were a refreshing delight. Too critical of women, too difficult as a rule to please, Adair discovered that the girl his friend was to marry was the most attractive person he had ever seen.

Miss Desprey as a pretty girl would have amused him, he would without

compunction have flirted with her. But he felt that she was more than this, she was a woman whose love was passion and to whom passion was love. He knew that a man like himself had never come into her life. She bent her smiles upon him, was happy when he came, miserable when he went, and every expression of her mobile face and of her enchanting voice told him that she cared for him and in a language unmistakable to a man who knows women.

Helena saw that her aunt did not like Adair, and it touched her and amused her as well. Whereas, on the contrary, the little old lady appealed to Adair's taste and fancy. And he was gallant and courteous to her in a way she mistrusted and half liked.

"He has a French manner, Helena, and it makes an Anglo-Saxon suspicious."

Adair now walked to and fro on the bank of the river, smoking. Ruffled by the wind, the Nile stirred and flashed under the fading moon. It was ten o'clock. He had promised to call at the *Tiflis* after dinner and he had not gone. Down in a nook under the bank the boat nestled, her lights around her

like little jewels on a queen. She was ready to steam down to Cairo, and Captain Maccerdene was to return on her in a few more days.

On the lighted deck of the steamer Adair could see Miss Desprey standing by the rail; she wore her long cloak about her shoulders and he knew that she was waiting for him to come.

If it were really, after all, nothing but a game, and a short one, at best? Why shouldn't he win out in it? He seemed to hold the winning cards. He could force Maccerdene's hand, there wasn't much doubt about that. He had never failed to get what he wanted. As far as Maccerdene was concerned, he'd have to take his dose like a man. This girl didn't love him, that was certain, and it was better to find out before marriage than after.

What did he mean to do? If they kept on riding together, she would break her engagement with Maccerdene. No, he didn't believe that she would. He rather thought she would stick to her word, she was that kind. What if her strong heart might prove too great for such a lie?

What had made her sad like that this afternoon when they were riding together, what? Whatever it was, she had been more lovely than ever, with a little droop at her eyelids, and a sort of vague appealing sweetness to her that had given him an impulse to lean across his horse and kiss her.

Adair went now directly down the bank, and the sand crumbled between his feet.

"I must know," he said to himself, "what made her sad to-day. I couldn't stand that, it was too much for me. When she has told me I shall go and hunt some lions, and caravan to the Red Sea."

When Adair boarded the *Tiflis*, Miss Desprey was standing at the head of the little staircase, and Adair, as he took her hand, felt it cold and realized that it was trembling.

"I don't believe your aunt will forgive my being so late. Will she see me, do you think?"

"Aunt Lucy has been in her room

for a long time. I did not tell her you were coming. She had a touch of the sun to-day, and I think she would rather not be disturbed."

Two chairs were placed under the awning, a little out of the wind, which was blowing up fresh.

"The wind," Adair said, "is up for keeps, I should think. There will be a hurricane to-morrow. When it blows like this doesn't it seem to sweep the desert right into the Nile?"

"Yes."

"It's the only thing I don't like about the Sudan," he said. "The wind makes me very nervous, it's brutal, exciting. May I light a cigar? I've been trying to walk the blue devils away up there on the bank, but they don't seem to want to go a bit."

He lit his cigar, flung the match over the rail, smoked it a few moments, looking out at Halfa and the town. His face was troubled and a little anxious, but he turned with a short laugh, as though he were trying to get rid of the fiends, threw himself down in one of the long chairs, and said:

"Don't you want to sit just over there, in front of me, so I may watch you as I smoke? I can't stay long; I know I'm too late as it is."

Helena did as he asked, and faced him, her elbows on her knees, and her chin in her hand.

"I went out to dine with some officers at the mess. I played some poker and lost, for a change; and before I knew what I was doing, it was too late to come and see you, and so—I came!"

The girl laughed tremulously, and the shake in her voice struck a chord in him that set his pulse beating.

"Maccerdene tells me that he's got a year's leave. He's going to America, isn't he? I believe that he will get fit there. You're to be married next autumn, aren't you?"

It was the first reference he had made to her engagement.

"There's never been a time set for a wedding-day," she replied. "We haven't talked about marriage since I've been here."

Her face looked small and white as

she held it between her hands. Her beautiful eyes, susceptible to many changes of color, were grave, and Adair's curiosity was piqued by a certain expression in them. He was already a victim to a passionate desire to understand everything she felt and of knowing every thought.

He said: "I've arranged everything as far as I could about the journey down. The doctor will go along, of course, and Miss Mercer as well."

"You speak as if you were throwing us over."

He smoked for a moment or two before he answered. "I'm off to-morrow to get a little shooting. I can't go down to Cairo at present. I think I shall caravan to the Red Sea."

She exclaimed in a rather startled fashion, and a door of steel seemed to shut down between her and her companion.

At last she spoke: "They tell me it's not safe to go with the caravans into the interior at present."

"Oh, I'm not afraid to risk it. I've had a wandering life, a reckless life, and the very fact that there is some danger back of a thing is sufficient to give it interest to me. And yet," he laughed, "I've been known to turn coward and run."

"But they say there are dervishes who are giving trouble, and the heat is so terrible now, and there are fevers, as well."

"I don't believe it," Adair said coolly, "the desert is as safe as the *Esbekieh*, in Cairo. I shall have a ridiculous lot of people around me, anyway." Then he said more humorously: "But it's awfully good of you to care or think about it."

She answered quietly: "I shall think about it until I know that you are safe at Port Sudan."

"Thanks. I'll send you a messenger and a lion's skin, as Mark Antony sent to Cleopatra."

He had finished his cigar, and rose. "I think I should go; it's a quarter before midnight, and I know your aunt disapproves of me, anyway; and if I linger on she may do something very

desperate and cheat the dervishes and the plague."

He put out his hand to say good-by, and looked at her, smiling.

"Before I go will you do me a favor?" he asked.

"Gladly."

"Tell me what made you sad to-day on our ride to Shellal. Something happened, and I've been cudgeling my brain to think what it might be."

She took so long to answer him that he retracted the question.

"No," she said, "I would like to have you know, only it's difficult to explain."

They were walking along slowly, side by side on the deck, toward the staircase by which he was to descend.

Helena leaned on the boat-rail, and the wood felt cool and refreshing to her hand. She did not know how to tell him what she wanted, and yet she felt she would never be at peace unless she did so.

"I heard something," she said, speaking quickly, "that troubled me."

He started, her answer was so different to the one he had expected. A sudden revulsion came over him and a fury that wind of scandal or evil should have blown about him to this woman—not that it would be likely to harm him in her eyes, but that she should hear anything of wrong. The man, who had not scrupled to introduce his own passions into the lives of women, hesitated now in the protecting love he had for the purest and dearest creature he had ever come near. He said gravely:

"Well, I'm dreadfully sorry that you've heard anything to trouble you. I can't think what it is; it might be anything, but I don't like to feel that your peace has been disturbed." He looked her full in the eyes.

"Thank you," she said gently. "I don't think any real woman can live and not have her peace troubled, do you? And if one could live like that, it would only prove that one didn't know how to feel. I don't mind any *pain* it may have given me," she said simply. "That is not the reason it made me sad."

He passed his hand across his forehead, his old familiar gesture, lifting his thick hair above the scar.

"Whatever you've heard," he said desperately, "is more than likely to be true, but I'm sorry it had to come."

"I don't believe that it was true," she said. "I told Aunt Lucy that it was a cruel lie."

"I'm sorry you did that," he said eagerly, "because she was very likely to be right. The desert," he said, with a gesture toward the East, "is the place for me; the plague and the dervishes and the lions as well have made you sad and your aunt ill, no doubt." He stopped with his last words, her face was too beautiful, too divine in its tender, grave solicitude; and yet it was scarcely grave, it grew bright with a confidence in him and charming with its faith in him.

Something more than regret came to him. His heart smote him, no woman had ever looked on him like this. With a sudden vehemence he exclaimed: "I wish I had never crossed your path!"

He thrust his hands deep in his pockets and clenched them there, he bit his lip and looked at her out of eyes into which despair had suddenly come. His past in that second rose to his lips like a bitter scum, a foul scum, a mingling of gall and ashes; it sickened him and he would rather have died than meet her eyes. But he met them without a quiver in his own.

He was aware, even in his suffering, that a great passion for this woman was born in him and sprung full statured to life, and with it came the conviction that he must save her from himself, from loving him.

He threw his head up, and with something like defiance he said: "Please let me tell you now that what you have heard is true."

"How do you know?" she breathed half inaudibly. "How can you be so sure? Have you committed every crime in the world?"

He smiled and flushed scarlet for the first time in long years.

"Well, pretty nearly," he said slowly, "though I don't believe you've heard

about them all. Still, I don't want you to have the pain of telling me what you have heard—let me tell you, now, that it's all true."

He started rather defiantly to go toward the stairs. Helena followed. At the head of the stairs he paused, however, and turned about and saw as he looked into her face that not a line of it had altered, that there was no judgment on it, and that she was holding out her hand. He set his teeth, he would drive home to-night the truth that must definitely part them; he must set her free from him, whatever fancy she might have.

"I won't take that merciful hand," he said brusquely. "I ought never to have touched it at all. To-morrow you know I'm going on, and—" he dropped his voice, his tone was full of an unmis-takable meaning—"my household, such as it is here in Cairo, goes on with me."

He paused while his truth went home. "Think of me as some one whom the desert has swallowed up, if you think of me at all."

Well, he had made her cruelly pale; she stood with parted lips, gazing at him with not one frost of puritan judgment, not one flickering criticism on her face.

She breathed: "I shall think of you as some one who has promised to send me a message of some one from whom I must hear."

Mute with wonder at her character and her mercy, he paused, for he had begun to go down the stairs. In the words she had thought to say there was something of protection for him, a tangibility, a tenderness which, in spite of the coarse armor he had thrown on, touched his vital flesh. He caught his breath sharply, ran up the few steps toward her, and said: "I thank you from my heart. The messenger shall go to you, he shall go!"

"Good-by," she added, now more controlled than he was. "Don't forget Kentucky, the Blue Grass country, when you come to America. There are good horses there." Her hand was out to him once more.

He seized it almost brutally in both his; he looked her deep in the eyes; he brushed her hand against his heart, against his breast, against his lips, then he lifted it and put it against his eyes; and almost as she thought he was about to draw her into his arms, he dashed her hand from him and threw himself down the stairs.

CHAPTER XI.

Aunt Lucy watched her niece on the journey back to Cairo with anxiety.

Helena read to her fiancé, sat with him, and was good to him with a fervor whose zeal had something religious in it, and whose nervous exactitude suggested that she was making a sacrifice.

Until they reached Assuan they had the boat to themselves, except for the few officers who were going down with them from Halfa, and in Nubia Helena welcomed the long days and the still nights, for they gave her time to dream and to suffer and to wonder about the land that lay beyond the opalescent mountains between herself and Arabia.

One day Maccerdene said: "Do you actually dislike Adair?"

"No."

"Well, you fight shy of the subject every time I broach it. You see, I've a tremendous debt to pay off; he stood by me like a brick. I wouldn't be alive to-day if it were not for Sydney, and I want him to come to Kentucky before Christmas, and I want him to be best man at my wedding."

Helena had been playing a series of little melodies on her guitar, and she touched the accompaniment of "I'll Sing Thee Songs of Araby." She loved the music, which seemed to carry her over the tops of these pale hills, and she smelled the spice of the Persian gardens.

"Aunt Lucy is frightfully down on Adair," Maccerdene went on. "She is prejudiced against him, and," he said keenly, looking at her, "I expect she is prejudicing you as well. Women can't judge of these things."

"I don't judge him."

"He seems to have led a nomadic

existence altogether," Captain Maccerdene went on, "and, after all——"

Helena interrupted. "I know nothing of what you say," she said rather sharply, "and, of course, I do not dislike Mr. Adair; on the contrary, I admire him."

"Good," said the officer delightedly, "bully! I've been fighting shy of Sydney's name, and I'm glad that it isn't necessary."

Miss Desprey bent over her instrument, running from one melody to another.

"How long," she suddenly asked, "does it take to caravan to the Red Sea?"

"About three weeks."

"It would take nearly two months, then," she figured to herself, "to get a message out."

Every turn of the *Tiflis'* paddle took her farther from Sudan; the greener, more velvetlike shores of lower Egypt began to trail their verdure along the muddy Nile banks; from the fields in flower came the delicious scent of the bean-blossom, carried out to meet the river odor itself, and the *Tiflis* sailed through a perfumed land.

But to the woman who saw it all with an aching heart, the magic lay between the wall of hills whose high sides ran like coral, like amethyst, like pearl against the sky. She never tired of the study of the Libyan Hills, her eyes almost pierced their hollows at night, and she sent her thoughts between them to the trackless waste where Sydney Adair's caravan made its slow way across the sand country.

When his last words, "My household goes with me," came with ugly insistence to her mind, she thrust the words away. She couldn't believe him, she wouldn't believe him. Her aunt's story had been to her at first like a blow through all her senses—the idea of a native woman as a wife for him. Slowly, as her senses recovered the shock, there was less jealousy in her heart than a sort of compassion. Sydney Adair could not love an Arab. She had only to let herself feel his lips upon her hand and the beating of his

heart against her hand—the feeling of her hand on his eyelids when he had pressed her fingers there, to efface and blot out every other thought in the world.

During the next fortnight, sitting by Maccerdene's side, she heard as much of Sydney Adair, very nearly, as her ears could wish. And whatever life her constant vision of him had lacked before, it grew to excess now as Maccerdene drew for her the character of the man who had so splendidly stood by him. All that Maccerdene knew about Adair's conquest at Ageiga he kept to himself, but his admiration of the man's character and talent animated everything he said.

There were other reasons why Helena was glad that Maccerdene had a topic of interest in his friend: when he did not talk of this he spoke of themselves, and she dreaded personalities more than anything else.

CHAPTER XII.

Three months later there was a ball at the British embassy at which Miss Desprey and her aunt were present, and the girl, in response to an ardent prayer from one of the attachés, had been dancing all the evening.

The young attaché, who had scarcely left her side, toward midnight led her out onto one of the verandas and, holding her fan, bent over her, paying her ardent court. Just then, behind them, in the open window, she heard her name pronounced and from the inner room a man stepped out into the foliaged balcony. It was Robert Scranton. Her first thought, as she exclaimed, with surprise, and gave him her hand, was that Scranton had come from the desert, from Suakim, that he had caravanned to the Red Sea. She greeted him warmly, presented him to the Englishman as an old friend, and the young man, after a few moments, left then alone together. Scranton was brown as an Arab.

"Yes," he said, as she remarked this, "and you, on the contrary, are fairer than ever before."

Helena drew her scarf across her throat and held it together as if to protect herself from his eyes.

"Did you get to the Red Sea?" she asked.

"Yes, and back again."

She said with admiration: "Oh, I want you to tell me all about the journey—every step of it, its dangers and everything you saw and did."

He exclaimed delightedly. "It's awfully good of you to care. Of course I'll tell you. It's a most magnificent experience, only very rough and very hard."

Miss Desprey commanded him to sit by her side, and, eagerly fixing her eyes upon him, urged him: "Well, well, begin, won't you?"

Scranton, amazed at her interest, charmed by the sight of her in her shining dress, as its white folds fell about her, and fascinated by her brilliant face, around which was a rich, dark crown, began with a smile:

"You look like *Desdemona*, and I wish I could think of some way to charm you by my Eastern tale. Well, we started away from the little village, as you remember——"

"Did you meet any other caravan?" she interrupted.

"Only one or two native companies. Toward the end we ran up against a single man; otherwise I was alone, from start to finish."

"Who was the man?"

"I'll tell you in a minute. It's curious, too, but it comes at the very end of my experiences, and I want to tell them from the beginning."

"You can begin just as well," she said cruelly, "at the other end. Who was the man?"

Poor Scranton, a little nonplused, said: "Why, we struck a severe sand-storm, one of those ghastly hurricanes the old books tell of, and a chap who was traveling in had got away from his men and lost his way. Lucky for him he wandered into our tracks and we took him in. The wind and sand were so terrible we could scarcely tell whether he was a black man or a white man. He bunked with me, and in the

most lunatic sort of fashion rushed off before I was awake, the next morning. That isn't the curious part of it," he said, nodding mysteriously. "He left a letter on my table with a word to me, asking me to fetch it in to Cairo." Scranton put his hand in his pocket and drew out an envelope. "Now," he said, "this is the curious part of it; the letter was addressed to you."

He handed it to her with the precision of a postman, and her hand shook as she took it.

"It seems, as he explained in his note to me," Scranton went methodically on, "that he had met you in Halfa."

Miss Desprey said: "Thanks." It was all the word she could find.

And Scranton, who now that he had begun at the other end and couldn't be turned from his course, continued: "He said that it was a wager between you and him; that he would like to have sent you a lion's skin, but he had lost his kit. You're going back to Europe to-morrow?" he asked abruptly.

And she said: "Yes, yes, in a few days."

And he exclaimed as her partner for the cotillion came to find her: "You will let me see you later, won't you, before you go?"

Half promising him a rendezvous for the following afternoon, she said to her partner:

"I think that I shall not dance any more to-night. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I'm feeling rather ill. You will help me find my aunt? I'm going to ask her to take me directly home."

CHAPTER XIII.

The incident had been even more dramatic than Scranton, on the terrace of the embassy, had seen fit to tell in detail to Miss Desprey.

He had been sitting in his tent reading late by the light of his traveling-lamp when the hurricane broke upon them. The approach of the wind, announced by a roar and a cry that was an undertone from the very earth's pro-

foundest caverns, came as suddenly as if the whole force had been directed against the little caravan in the desert. Scranton's tent in a twinkling was swept off its pegs, the lamp extinguished, and he himself staggered about against his scattered belongings, half pinioned by the canvas, contriving to hold up the door-flap finally, and grope out into the open. There the sand struck him in the face, and in the uproar he could hear the cries of his servants and of the camels.

His own man caught him by the arm.

"The only thing to do, *effendi*, is to fall down upon your face." He threw a burnoose over Scranton's head. "This may last all night."

The wind was icy, piercing cold, and the sand from which he shook himself free filled up around him, and he breathed it and smelled it until he grew fairly sick. He lay fast on his face, almost clutching the ground, and even then he felt like a bit of paper, which might be whisked off the earth.

The storm was still at the height of its fury when Scranton heard something like a weak shout, a voice distinctly not a native's, and over him a man fell prone.

Scranton sprang up with the wind, struggled with it, and found himself in the very arms of a man, who said to him in English:

"Jove, a human being! And a warm one. Where are you? I've lost my caravan."

They had sunk down in the dark hurricane side by side. When finally the wind died and the dawn came, the two men, snow-white with sand, seared and beaten with the biting, irritating element, laughed grimly at each other, and shook hands.

The newcomer said: "My name is Adair. I'm on my way to the Red Sea, or I was, but those devilish men of mine mutinied, and, after robbing me of every sou-marquee, they've left me to try my fate with the desert. I had already sent my personal servant and another man on with the camels into Suakim. They happen to be the sort of chaps you can trust with a king-

dom, and they'll be back for me without fail here to-morrow. I suppose you are going on."

Adair had a handkerchief bound about his forehead.

"You're wounded," Scranton said.

"No," he replied, "it's an old cut, a dervish cut from up the river. It broke out last night again in the excitement of the tussle with the storm."

When Scranton had succeeded in preparing them some breakfast and Adair and his host sat before their coffee, Scranton said: "Of course, you won't seriously think of looking up those animals? It's far too dangerous a piece of work, the whole desert isn't worth a white man's skin."

Adair shrugged. "That depends," he said seriously; "they robbed their master, and the desert itself will punish them if I don't. I'm going to leave them to their ultimate and several fates."

Scranton asked: "Then you don't believe in revenge?"

"Lord, no," Adair said easily.

"Or justice?"

Adair laughed. "Oh, it's so relative, isn't it? Codes differ so."

And Scranton said slowly: "There are certain codes that don't differ; they are alike in all civilizations."

And Adair indifferently agreed that perhaps he was right.

The hot coffee and the fresh water had restored him, but his head ached still, and he wanted to sleep. He had refused the aid of Scranton's medicine-chest, and washed his own forehead and rebound it himself in his own handkerchief.

"Without being ridiculous," he said, "I can't apologize for trespassing on your hospitality. We were rather thrown at one another, weren't we? And, under the circumstances, I think you'll understand if I ask to take a nap, for I begin to feel rather as though the sand had blown into my brain."

Scranton acknowledged to very much the same feeling, and both men turned in, Scranton giving his own *angareb* to his guest, and rolling himself up on the floor.

Scranton from his corner said: "I see you're a first-rate sport, but I think you overestimate your strength. I'm not going to leave the quarter until your people find us, and if they don't turn up, you'll have to come along with us."

"Thank you," Adair replied. "You said," he went on, "that your name was Robert Scranton. Where do you come from?"

"Kentucky," said the other. "I'm a Southerner."

"Ah, yes," returned his companion.

Adair turned over on his side, his eyes on the Arabic pattern of the red and blue lining of his host's little house in the desert.

"So-long," he said, "until luncheon, and thanks very much."

Mr. Scranton, of Kentucky, slept very well, but the man on the bed in whose head the sudden rush of blood had caused confusion, didn't sleep at all. His face grew set and stern, his eyes darkly shadowed, and he knit his brows painfully under the old scar and the new wound.

After a little he rose from his *angareb* very cautiously, put on his coat, thrust his pistols back into his belt, filled his pockets with cigarettes and matches, filled himself, too, a fresh flask of whisky, and then, as cautiously as he had done the rest, extracted some paper from Scranton's portfolio, and on the edge of the bed wrote two letters, which occupied him for something like an hour.

One of the letters he addressed to Scranton, the other to Helena Desprey, and when he had finished them both, he rose and, leaving his host still profoundly asleep, stole out with his boots in his hand from the tent.

Scranton, when he awakened with a start, toward four o'clock in the afternoon, found his tent empty except for his servant, who was fetching in his tea.

"The *effendi* has gone," said the Arab.

Scranton's near-sighted eyes stared at him.

"Gone, you fool! Where?"

"Why, he took a camel and a boy, and went over there, toward Suakim."

"My God!" exclaimed Scranton. "You are a fool!"

"Here," said the man imperturbably, "are the letters the *effendi* left."

Scranton tore his open. It ran:

DEAR SCRANTON: According to the signs of war and peace there's going to be a dervish raid all round this region within twenty-four hours, therefore the best part of valor, as far as you are concerned, is to get on. I wouldn't keep you here on my account, and I have business in Suakim. Therefore, I've stolen a camel and a boy, some food, some cigarettes, and some wet stuff. The dervishes didn't take my check-book, and if you will find out through any banker in Cairo, you will see that this trifle is good for the price of a camel. I won't suggest paying for the drink, the food, and the cigarettes, because you'd shoot me. I don't know if they feel about camel-stealing in the Orient as they do in the West about a horse, but I won't take any risks.

A lady whose family I knew at Halfa will be at Shepherd's. I made a little wager with her that I would send in a message from the Red Sea. Possibly you won't mind giving Miss Desprey this letter. Now don't be a fool and follow me, but get along as fast as you can yourself and good luck to you.

Faithfully,

SYDNEY ADAIR.

The other envelope contained Helena Desprey's letter, and Scranton stared at the superscription in surprise, then he laughed.

"Well, upon my word!" he said. "Upon my word!"

After conferring with his Arabs and discovering the utter futility of trying to follow the wanderings of Mr. Sydney Adair in the Sahara, Scranton acted like an obedient child, and did exactly what his departed guest had told him to do; he went on, but he went on very thoughtfully.

He carefully read a letter he had received in Naples on his arrival from the United States some six weeks before. It was from Tom Moody, and told him that Bill Flanders had embarked for the East, and that he was on his trail.

The second letter, which met him at Cairo, gave him the details of the Sudanese campaign, and in closing said:

Don't forget, when you run up against

him, the greaser's scar. I've often told you how it ran, from his scalp to the beginning of his hair. It's enough to track him by.

Scranton folded his letters and put them away, and, as his tents were struck, he looked in the direction of Suakim, which he had just left; and wondered.

CHAPTER XIV.

Alone at length in her room, Helena drew the letter from under her pillow and unsealed the envelope, looking long at the address, the first handwriting of Adair's she had seen. This was the letter written in Scranton's tent, on the knees of a man who had been awake while his enemy slept, but that she did not know.

She drew out the sheets and opened the first page.

This is my third letter to you. Mark Antony's example amused me so much that I have tried several times to follow it. I guess you will never get the other letters which I sent in at different times by some of these wretched natives. I am afraid the poor chaps, however, are carrion by this. I've been fighting with the desert fourteen days, not with the sands or the fever or with the dervishes, although I've had whacks at all these, but with worse things. I took one of these mental devils by the throat the night I said good-by to you on the *Tifis* and I've been at him ever since. First of all I'm going to tell you something, although it does not really make any difference. I told you that I should fetch my household with me. I meant you by that to understand a certain thing. I came in with my servants and that is all.

Here the writer had scratched out several lines, which she tried in vain to read.

I have an idea that to a good woman there are one or two facts which are valuable, but I don't know much about good women or about anything good. I suppose a woman likes to learn that a man is better for having looked her in the face. Well, I should like to be able to tell this to you—I'm afraid I can't. It would take more than a look to vanquish the devils that possess me, more than a look. There is a whole tribe of men who play on a woman's sympathy, they tell her how bad they've been and that she is the only thing on God's earth that can save them. The seductive villain is an old story.

Now I'm going to rather reverse that rôle, and I'm afraid that what I say will give you pain. You've a kind and tender heart, but here's the truth. As I sit here writing in Scranton's tent, the devils are as strong with me to-night as they have been all my life. In a few hours I shall be alone in the wilderness; the game is a toss-up with me. I don't know whether I shall ever find my people or get to Suakim alive; but, at any rate, I'm going to try. Now I'm going to ask you not to mention me to Scranton. I shall take it as a kindness if you do not tell him much about Halfa at any time. This is all I have to ask, and I feel that a word to you is enough.

He closed with the words:

Think of me as some one who has been lost in the desert.

This was his message to her from the Red Sea.

The poor girl read it over and over a dozen times, with blinding tears, until she couldn't see to read it any more. She pressed it against her heart and sobbed over it. Oh, if she might but have followed him there, if she might follow him wherever he was and fetch him what she could!

It was six o'clock before she slept, and the following morning, on the terrace, at eleven, she beckoned Scranton over to her.

"Sit down here, won't you, and tell me about finding Mr. Adair in the sand-storm; it must have been fearfully interesting. Tell me it all."

And he began at the beginning, and told her through to the end. Then she leaned toward him accusingly.

"And you mean to say that you let him go on alone!"

"Let him! It seems to me he took matters in his own hands."

"Why didn't you follow him?"

"Over a trackless waste," Scranton exclaimed. "Why, who in heaven's name could tell which direction he had taken? He had been gone six hours when I knew."

She was breathing quickly. "And you left that single man," she said, in a low voice, "alone to his fate?"

Scranton stared at her. "My dear Miss Desprey!" he said, and his tone was sufficient to put her on her guard,

and she remembered that she had gone too far.

She bit her lip and her breast heaved. She must not awaken this man's curiosity any further.

"Take it altogether, your own trip was successful?" she asked.

His face clouded. "No, a bitter failure, from beginning to end."

She looked in surprise at his tense tone.

"Why, you speak as though a shooting and hunting and exploring excursion were a matter of life and death."

And Scranton said grimly: "So it was! It's one of a hundred excursions on which I have been for the last five years."

In surprise she repeated: "For five years? Why, what do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing," he evaded. "But, at all events, I didn't start up any game."

CHAPTER XV.

The worst of it all was her entire helplessness not only before the fate that drove him from her, but before her own feelings, before the charm of them—that, whenever Adair's name was spoken, whenever the mental picture rose before her, it swept her, body and soul. This unknown man, with a life back of him whose realities he did not wish her to suspect, with a present which every honest-hearted woman was taught to disapprove—this man was everything to her.

The day the Alexandrian port shut Egypt from her sight, she went into her cabin for twenty-four hours, alone, absorbed, swallowed up, invaded by the country whose heart held for her all the world.

She had sent a letter to Adair's address at Shephard's, in which she said only:

Remember that Kentucky has plains and horses to ride, and that there is a welcome there.

And she threw this little bit of paper into the void, as it were, sure that it would never reach his hands.

They traveled by the slowest stages, and finally, in the following summer,

Maccerdene's people met them in Paris, the week before they sailed for New York. And it was there, with the family party in full force, that the question of the wedding-day was broached. Miss Desprey was appealed to.

She might even then have found courage to escape from her engagement if the very strongest of batteries had not been brought to bear upon her. Her aunt's silent acquiescence to the situation she might have thwarted, even the affectionate attitude of Roger's father and his taking for granted that she was to be his daughter-in-law so soon. Even such effects as these she might have weakened. But Roger himself touched her beyond words; he was ill, very ill. Never thoroughly recovered from his wounds in the Sudan, he had also been smitten with fever, and the very gravest doubts were entertained about his future health. Helena could not find it in her heart to put the last blow to his happiness, and to risk helping him down into a fatal disease.

One afternoon when she went to her room to dress she realized that she had given her consent, that she had set a day, and that its existence would quite spoil every other day in the calendar for her for a long time to come.

Colonel Maccerdene took her to the Auteuil races, and as he drove her out in his motor he was proud of his prospective daughter.

The day was superb, and the vivid colors of the lawn and turf and the bright dresses made a brilliant picture. Colonel Maccerdene found Helena a chair, and for a moment left her alone, going back among the crowd to find himself another camp-stool.

Suddenly she uttered a cry. Her eyes had fallen upon Adair. He was standing not far away, talking to two women gorgeously arrayed.

One of them was very beautiful, the other she could not see. A mist of agony came over her sight, a dull ache in her throat, and in another moment she must have wept. She turned quickly aside, and walked across the *pesage*, indifferent to the fact that she was alone, and improperly so, and that

she would lose Colonel Maccerdene and not be able to find him in the crowd.

She had not gone one hundred steps in her agitation before she regretted that she had put so much distance between herself and Adair. He would never see her now, he would never find her; there was no chance now that he would speak to her or observe her in this mass of people. What difference did it make with whom he was or where? He was alive, alive, on the face of the earth, and she loved him! She stood still, where she was. The race had begun, the sun poured on her, and she opened her parasol over her head and stood under its violet shadow. Very pale, with tears in her eyes, her lips trembling, she fastened her gaze on the race-track, and Phaeton might have been driving the sun for all she knew or saw of the race.

As she stood so, her heart still beating and trembling with emotion, Adair came up to her, and before she had turned about she heard him speak her name.

Sydney Adair had come suddenly upon people who did not expect him; he had come upon women whose interest in him was keen, but he had never looked into such eyes, upon such a face, into such a welcome, or toward such tenderness as now, when Helena Desprey gave him her hand.

"I thought you were in the desert, Mr. Adair."

Without hesitation, he replied: "I was—I have been—but I'm in Paradise."

They neither of them spoke for a second, then Adair got out his racing-card, and said something about a horse that was running.

"I found your note in Cairo," he finished, "as I passed through. You are well? I needn't ask. You look well, only a little thin, I think. I didn't believe that it was possible you could have grown more charming, but I see that what I have been thinking about is a poor image."

Helena put her hands to the flowers at her bodice. "Please do not speak to me like this," she said. "I cannot

bear it. Here is Captain Maccerdene's father; he's coming for me. He'll want to meet you. Are you staying—or living in Paris?"

"I'm going to-night to Carlsbad."

"Colonel Maccerdene, this is Mr. Adair, of whom you've heard Roger speak. You will be glad to know him."

The men shook hands, and Helena turned her attention to the race, and tried to recover her self-control. As they walked along toward their motor, she heard Adair say: "I'll run in to see Maccerdene for a second before my train, but I'm going on to-night."

All the way back to the hotel, in the motor, Miss Desprey sat silent. The men talked together, and in her corner of the car she struggled against fate.

Colonel Maccerdene helped her out at the door, she heard Adair refuse for dinner, and then she followed him into Captain Maccerdene's room.

On the threshold he said to her: "I'm afraid this is good-by, Miss Desprey, as my train goes at seven."

And she had bidden him good-by, while her heart turned to stone in her breast.

She thought as she reached her room: "I have set my marriage-day. Would I have done it if I had seen him yesterday?"

And she decided: "Yes, he doesn't care, he doesn't care, and he thinks that I do. Oh, shame!"

She laid her burning cheeks against her hands and stared at the image the mirror gave her back again.

"He does care," she said slowly, "he does! I don't believe I'm the woman to love a man who doesn't love me. He's fighting against it for Roger's sake; he's killing his love for a false idea. Oh"—and she cried his name—"Sydney, Sydney!"

CHAPTER XVI.

When Adair, in his compartment of the Carlsbad express, had sent the porter away with the injunction not to make up his berth until late, he fastened an electric traveling-lamp into

the cushions, took his book, and settled back deep in his corner. Even in the rocking train, with a fairly decent bed to roll out at his order, Adair didn't want to pass a comfortable night; he wanted to stay awake and think.

Sitting in the corner of his carriage, he told himself that for twenty-four years he had lived the life of an easy scoundrel, that it was a little lifetime, the heart in the best of a chap's life, and Adair knew that there had not been a voice ringing down the time to call him to change his ways until now.

Roughly speaking, he was worth about seven millions of dollars, and save for the headaches that ransacked his forehead and brain from the Sudan wound and from another wound received from the greaser whom he had killed in Texas, except for certain scars and cuts, he had never known a serious illness; he was in the prime of life, and he decided there wasn't a cranny of the world that he really desired or a single thing he wished to do or undertake.

"I wonder," Adair thought, among other things, "what Scranton hopes really to do with me? What he can do? If fate will be with him or with me at the end?"

The state of mind he had fallen into was uncharacteristic of the man's sanguine temperament. His heart felt parched and dry as the desert itself. Where in God's name would he be this day if he could? What would he care to possess? In answer to this mental query he repeated: "Nothing, decidedly nothing."

Nevertheless, at this moment he carried in his pocket the note given him by the courier, the last thing before he left Cairo. He unfolded it now under the electric lamp, and reread it for the hundredth time.

The goodness, the pure, sweet goodness of it, to forgive and understand. No blame for him for the ugly thing she knew, no puritan criticism. The soft tenderness of the few words made a rest for him, repose for his tired thoughts.

He thought of her as he had seen her on the green turf of the course; she was like a white rose, like a perfect purple orchid, unworldly, charming, with that glorious welcome for him in her eyes, and—ah, heaven—on her lips.

Adair knew the delight of life had died; he closed his book, his head sank on his breast, and so he sat, bowed over in the rocking train. Hadn't he always held that there was only one thing worth a straw in the world—a woman's love? Hadn't he followed every lamp that ever flickered, tempting him until he found the morass under his feet and the slime, as he followed after the deceiving flame? Hadn't he sworn to know the real thing before he died?

Capacity had, indeed, gone out of him for every other conquest, but his appetite, his desire, his need for this one thing was not only as keen as ever, but more imperious. Why, then, since this woman lived and moved and had being, should he die of ennui and disgust? He knew that there was an

answer to this question; he had no earthly right to her, it would be a crime to let her love him. There was manhood enough in him still to triumph above the blackguard. He really loved her better than his own desire.

When he roused himself at length, his face was white; against the livid pallor the cut of his eyebrow showed scarlet.

He opened his window wide and let in the fresh night air. A breath blew across his spirit as clean as if fetched from some heavenly island, some virgin island, of whose existence, in his gross materialism, he had never dreamed.

"If a man die, shall he live again?" He said the words aloud, half-conscious of their meaning. The jolting of the cars sent his book to the floor, Helena's letter fell out, and he picked it up; it brought him his answer.

"I will go to her," he said, quite aloud to the noise of the express. "I will go and find her, and perhaps her touch will make me whole."

PART IV.

CHAPTER I.

The old house of "The Lawns" was full of Revolutionary relics, and heirlooms suggesting other lives and other homes, and other people whose existence had been picturesque and charming, and who had left their marks upon their times. There was a library of rare and modern books, shelves built around the walls, and here, Helena, in one of the deep chairs, with her book in her hand, might forget the rush of the time that was carrying her into the life of a man she did not love and away from Sydney Adair.

There were pictures on these walls, fine ladies whose curls and puffs, whose crinolines and laces, brought back colonial times, and fetched England as near as a sister or a mother. On the sideboards there was old silver kept white as snow, and the best of wines, and the best of Southern hospitality passed from door to door.

Captain Maccerdene, still an invalid,

subject to returns of fever, forbidden all manner of sports and pleasures, had renounced his commission in the English army, and returned to Kentucky with a friend, Lord Cecil Manners. There was a breezy good comradeship about Manners to which Miss Desprey responded. He was impersonal, and absorbed in affairs of his own, and in no danger of falling in love with her, for he had, as he expressed it, "a girl at home."

They had been riding all the afternoon. The coolish close of the day had come in with them, and the air, sharp with the autumn and sweet with the odors of pine and balsam, drifted through the long, open windows.

"I will light the fire," Helena said; "it only needs a match to the cones."

She stooped and shielded the match-flame, touching the resinous cones with the fire, and the dry kindlings smoked a second, and then sprang into a blaze.

"You know what they say," she smiled, looking up at the Englishman,

"the woman who makes a good fire will win a good husband."

The red of the newly created light flushed along her cheek, and the strands of her dark hair seemed lit by the flame.

The English guest thought Miss Desprey was ripping, a splendid woman, a handsome woman, and that Maccerdene was in great luck.

"Some one is coming to call," she said suddenly. "I hear steps on the veranda. All the neighborhood will be riding up now, as soon as they know we are home. You'll see some of the blue blood of Kentucky, Lord Cecil, and some curious types."

Through the door that was opened for him, a tallish man in gray riding-clothes and gray gloves came in.

Helena half rose at sight of him.

"Oh, Mr. Scranton, I didn't know you had come South. Lord Cecil Manners, Mr. Scranton. And, Rex, tell Miss Lucy who's here. She will be glad to see you. And also tell Captain Maccerdene that tea is served."

As Scranton sat down in the chair the Englishman had left, opposite Miss Desprey, the sight of him at once suggested the fact that he had been in Egypt, that she had known him there, that he had seen with her the splendor of those days, that if he had never been part of it, still they had been spectators together, and that he had seen and known Adair and talked with him. She smiled across the tea-table more kindly and warmly than he had ever seen her smile.

"If you've ridden over from Scrantonville, you'll be glad to have a cup of tea," she said, "or will you have whisky, an egg-nogg, or what?"

Scranton watched her hands as they fluttered among the tea-things.

"Just tea, I think. I got the habit in Egypt, and I like it even with milk."

"I haven't seen you since the embassy ball in Cairo," Scranton went on, "and that, you know, is nearly a year ago."

"I never have fully heard your experiences on the desert, Mr. Scranton, or your trip to the Red Sea, but the

thing I wish to hear most is something about that five years' hunt of yours. You spoke in a mysterious and fascinating way; fascinating, I mean to say," she went on, "because it implied secrecy. What were you hunting?"

Scranton looked at her as though he were about to tell her, and then he suddenly changed his mind.

"Perhaps I will tell you some day," he said, "when I have found what I'm looking for or given it up."

Inadvertently, as she handed him a cup of tea across the table, she said: "I didn't think you were the kind of man to give up things."

She regretted it as soon as she had spoken, for he said with an energy which startled her: "Oh, you never said a truer thing. I assure you I'm not. I hang on dreadfully, dreadfully—"

From beneath her stiff shirt-cuff Helena's hand was fine and slender; on the third finger of her left hand there was a hairlike thread of gold that held the solitaire of her engagement ring, and Scranton hated it and hated Captain Maccerdene.

"When are you to be married?" he asked suddenly. "May I know?"

"Early in December," she said briefly. And then, with witting cruelty: "Of course, you'll dance at my wedding?"

He stirred his tea without replying, looked down into his cup where the white and blue flowers lay at the bottom, under the clear amber, then he looked up at her over his glasses.

"There are nearly two months till then," he said slowly; "nearly sixty days. I'm going to see you every day until then, Miss Desprey."

"Oh, no," she exclaimed, "you mustn't think of doing such a thing."

Scranton nodded slowly. "I shall not only think of it, but I shall come. You're going to have a whole, long, happy life; all I ask is before you start off on that radiant journey that I may see you for a little while before. It's only a pittance"—he continued to nod with his words—"a sop—a bit of bread. I shall promise to come as a

friend, never to annoy you. I don't think that the woman lives who would refuse a man this."

He stopped and waited for her answer.

Helena had never been so hard at bay as this, held by him across the little table. She was not afraid of him, but she felt a certain power in the man; his pallor, his earnest eyes, his intensity overcame her.

"Don't," he breathed; "don't, I beg of you, refuse me."

"My people will think it very strange," she murmured. And as she spoke, the sacrifice she was herself making came over her in all its stature. She was to be a prisoner for life, a captive. What if this man should rouse Roger's jealousy? Might it not help her to set herself free? This idea, scarcely formed, touched her thoughts, but it was the expression on Scranton's face that made her say quickly: "Come as often as you like, Mr. Scranton. I see no reason why you should not come."

The voices of the others were already at the door. Scranton's sallow cheek flushed; he leaned impulsively toward her, and she didn't know his face could be so transfigured by a smile. He looked extremely handsome as he exclaimed, struck to the heart by her indulgence:

"I bless you, I bless you. You're an angel, an angel of goodness!"

And he rose, putting on his gloves, as Miss Maccerdene and the others came in.

CHAPTER II.

It was early October, and scarcely a hint in the air, before the sun went down, of any season but warm, full midsummer. The country was mellow and green as a ripe, luscious apple, and Maccerdene lounged on the veranda in his long chair, the dogs curled up beside him, his book on his lap, and Miss Lucy, sitting at hand, was knitting on the orange folds of a bright afghan scarf that fell around her.

Captain Maccerdene was the only

person at The Lawns who was fully content.

"Aunt Lucy," he said, "you know the old gag: 'If you were not born an Englishman, what would you choose to be born?' and the answer is: 'Why, an Englishman, of course.' Well, I think that I would like to be a Kentuckian if I were not a Britisher. The country's really too splendid, the girls are so handsome, and the aunts are so ripping."

Aunt Lucy smiled devotedly. She didn't think she was ripping, but she thought she understood her nephew.

Captain Maccerdene saw very little of his fiancée. She appeared for the first time during the day at luncheon, radiant and unapproachable. They remained together in a family group until Helena went up-stairs to dress for her ride, which had been taken with Manners, until Scranton came. At tea they were once more together, and she disappeared with extraordinary alacrity to dress for dinner. And in spite of the fact that the others gave the lovers every opportunity to be alone, it seemed contrived by the lady that this event should be of very rare occurrence. And it began to pass that Scranton was eternally present.

Miss Maccerdene liked him uncompromisingly, Helena seemed to tolerate his arrivals, and his unobtrusive personality grew to pervade The Lawns, and, as far as Maccerdene was concerned, the whole of Kentucky. He began to suffocate, and was finally openly jealous. But Helena was apparently unconscious of it all, and went serenely on her way.

She submitted to his caresses, and, as she did so, once again before her seemed to extend the dreary, endless road.

Miss Desprey's harp, a tall, golden thing, had come from Louisville. It had been placed in the deep shadow of the window, a wide, dark space around it, and Helena sat behind it and played.

The others listened at the end of the big room: Maccerdene playing *bélique* with his aunt; Manners smoking and drinking his whisky and wa-

ter in luxurious comfort; and Scranton, neither smoking nor drinking, sat quietly watching Helena.

The girl's voice had the quality of a rare instrument, mellow and delicious; her nature and her passion for Adair gave it a depth and vibration that no one could hear and not be moved. Her musical education had been of the best, she played gracefully and well; but her voice was of the finest quality, resonant and sweet, with a tone in it like tears, and a range where every ascent was pure delight.

She sang them Irish songs, one by one, until the very odor of the turf and the damp, wet sweetness of the Irish fields seemed to pervade the room. She sang from Tom Moore's most touching "When Cold In The Grave Lies The Friend Thou Hast Loved," and, led on by her tenderness, she would have continued the Irish melody, but at a word from Scranton she let her fingers run into the Southern songs she knew he loved. And then she came out from behind her harp.

"Did I make any one cry?" she asked.

"I came jolly well near it," Manners confessed. And Scranton rose, saying that he must go.

On the porch, whither Helena had followed him, he spoke as though there had been no interval between the last time they had been alone together.

"I shall never cease to hope," he said, "as long as I live, as long as I live."

What could she reply to such obstinacy?

As though he understood her thoughts, Scranton said: "It would be useless to forbid me, you couldn't do anything about it."

At the foot of the steps his horse waited.

"If you knew," he continued, "how grateful your silence is."

And she shrugged desperately, exclaiming: "Oh, you asked far too much, you know, and you read what you like in my silence. You'll end by making me cruel. *Why* won't you—won't you—understand?"

Scranton came close to her side.

"You don't love Captain Maccardene," he said slowly, "*that* I understand, and for that I thank God!"

"You have no right to say such a thing, no right!"

He laughed shortly. "Oh, I don't stop to think about *right*. I certainly should stop at nothing if I knew a way to win you. And, at least, I see that you don't care for the man you are going to marry, and, as long as your heart is free——"

Helena stared in amazement at his obstinacy. At that moment she might have said a word which would have sent him out into the darkness to ride away forever and leave her at peace, but she did not care to say that word.

"Good night. I suppose if you won't be convinced, you won't. Good night."

As he rode away the darkness swallowed him up at once; there was no moon, and the night came down to the very steps of the house, black and obscure. Scranton had twelve miles in the darkness to ride.

"He's a real lover," she thought admiringly, "and he makes me almost afraid of him."

When she returned to the lighted room, she met Roger coming to find her.

"Ripping news, Nelly! I've just had a telegram over the telephone. What do you think it is?"

Helena threw off her cloak and waited.

"Don't you want to guess?"

"No," she said faintly.

"Well, it's from Adair. He's got as far as Leonardsville! He'll be here some day next week. Isn't he a brick? And of all things in the world, how do you think he's coming? He's riding down through the States!"

CHAPTER III.

The rider on his journey down to Kentucky crossed the border on a mild Indian summer day. He had ridden with frequent changes of mount through the glorious autumn world and through the glorious autumn forests,

along untraveled and little ridden routes.

The horse he mounted at length to cover the short fifteen miles between him and the property known as The Lawns was a young animal, graceful and alert, and with a skin like sarsenet. The creature had been fetched by slow stages from New York, ridden and led and petted and cajoled, and now when Adair threw his leg over him, he gave a neigh that was almost like a human being's cry, and threw his head up and sniffed Kentucky, as if in the resinous breeze, in the sweet smell of the open, in the spicy air of autumn blending with autumn fires, and sharp with the tinge of coming frost, he would smell some more mysterious breath, some more wonderful perfume.

Once away from the river and down the road out of sight of the people, Adair patted the horse gently on his mane and neck.

"There's nothing here, my poor Mustapha, to make you think of the desert. There's not even an oasis, everything is real. Come"—and he spoke a word or two in Arabic—"let's get along."

It had been the purest caprice with him to ride into Kentucky, to arrive unexpectedly at The Lawns, but it had been more than caprice which led him to fetch Mustapha with him. He wanted to give the Arab horse to Helena Desprey for a wedding-present.

Asking his direction from place to place, toward sundown he found himself in the next property to the Maccaderenes, and rode along roads bordered on either side by barren meadows, at whose feet a small river wound, a river, indeed, which he was once forced to ford with Mustapha.

Toward four o'clock he struck a forest road, an unequal road, but lovely and soft with red soil, here and there slippery with needles. The forest was thick and nearly virgin, and the light was very vague.

Half-way to the edge of the forest he met a horseman, who called out to him and drew rein, and the two men greeted each other from their saddles.

"Why, hello," said Scranton, "you've been expected for days, you know."

"The last time I saw you," the other man returned, "you were asleep, and I stole a boy and a camel and a lot of other things. You're not going to run me in for that, are you?"

The Southerner laughed. "You've got the devil's luck with you; it was a terrible risk you took. You'll have to tell me all about it."

Adair looked beyond the man to the road he was impatient to travel.

"How far am I from the Maccaderenes?"

"Oh, not more than three miles. Why, this is an Arab horse you're riding!"

"Yes, I fetched him from Halfa originally."

"By George! What a stunning beast!"

And Adair returned politely: "There's nothing the matter with your own horse, Scranton."

"Blue Grass; a different strain."

"By the way," Adair asked, "have you a light?"

"No, I don't smoke a great deal." And then Scranton bethought himself. "Yes, I think I have some matches. I lit Aunt Lucy's fire for her, and put some matches in my pocket."

He found them, and offered a cigar, which the other refused, taking some cigarettes out of his pocket.

As Adair bent to light his match at Scranton's hand, he took off his hat to screen the little flame. His head was bared; from his hair to his forehead there cut a fine red line like a little vein, a thin scar, and above it, close to the thick, strong hair that grew so well on his beautiful head, was a second, a deeper scar, an old scar.

Scranton's eyes fastened on them. The hand that held the match sprang back. He exclaimed aloud.

"What's the matter?" Sydney asked, puffing at his cigarette.

Mustapha was trying to bite the bay horse, and his master had only time to put his hat on and catch up his reins and draw the stallion back. Scranton, strangely silent, bade him a short good

night, and his horse, taking the bit between his teeth at his master's first persuasion, started quickly through the woods.

"My God!" said his master, after a few seconds. "My God! After all these years!"

Meanwhile, Adair took only a few puffs of his cigarette, carefully extinguished it, from an old pioneer habit, and let it drop. Now that he was within three miles of the place he had come thousands of miles to find, he let his horse go at a foot-pace.

"Why the devil should that chap cross my path here, of all places in the world? It was queer enough at the Red Sea, but here——"

Disturbed and troubled in spite of his cool nerve, his brow knitted, for his mind had grown to more cheerful meditations than revenge and feud and hatred.

"Well, what's he going to do with me, the intruder?" he asked himself. "That's what I want to know! What *can* he do?"

He tried to shake the impression of the meeting off, but it had an unfortunate and vivid effect upon him. Just how much did Scranton know? What means had he to prove his identity? It was an old score, but it must have struck him very close. At any event, he knew pretty well what he himself was going to do. He had come here to dance at Helena Desprey's wedding, to drink one cup of wine, and he had sworn to himself during the interval in the West, where he had been all these months, during his camp in the desert, during all the time when he had not seen her, he had sworn in the spirit of his own freebooter arrogance that he would kiss her lips before he died, go where he would in the end, relinquish her as he should, as he intended to do—once, once, before he died, he would kiss those lips of hers.

The human desire and its promise, coming to him now as he really reached the place where she was, stung him so, were so radiant, that he relegated to the shades the thought of Scranton and of death and disgrace.

He had come to an opening in the forest where the road grew so steep and rocky that in mercy to the sensitive beast under him, to whom the ride had been purgatory already, Adair dismounted and, throwing the bridle over his arm, led Mustapha, coaxing and caressing him, as though the stallion had been a timid child. As they came more and more into the open, in front of them the woods broke into a vision of a hill and meadows. Something like a little grove of bushy brake made a dark bower on the meadow slope, and, on a rock, the flare of the scarlet sumach and dogwood striking a crimson flame behind her, the full glory of the sunset before her, a woman was sitting, shielding her eyes with her hand.

Adair said "Sh—hh!" to Mustapha, and held him still. Their coming had made no noise at all; they were not more than a hundred feet away, and the woods hid them. From his vantage Adair looked down.

Adair decided that it was too sudden for him to come upon her so. He drew Mustapha back softly, softly, until they were out of any possible danger of being seen and heard, then he bent forward and feasted his eyes upon her through the curtain of green, and through the openings of the autumn branches.

To go forward to her now, to speak to her now would be the ruin of him; he couldn't meet her eyes, he couldn't touch her hand without the storm being loosed; with his first breath, with his first words he would have to tell her how he loved her. He was even capable of picking her up and, with Mustapha to help him, of carrying her off into those enchanted woods.

Scranton was behind him at the other end of them, and Maccardene was before, and he had come to be best man and to dance at her wedding.

Suddenly the woman rose, and Adair said to himself: "If she turns about and comes into the forest to me, why, I shall call it fate, and shall look upon it as a fair pool."

But Helena did not turn into the

forest, but toward the house, whose white columns and porches Adair could see through the trees of the little park in which it stood enclosed.

Well, even if he couldn't seize this welcome from her, for which his whole soul cried, he knew that her welcome waited for him at The Lawns, for she had told him so. When she had disappeared from sight and the way was free before him, Adair, still leading Mustapha, went down across the fields to claim that welcome from her hand.

CHAPTER IV.

Unhappy as he had been about his personal affairs, his meeting with Adair in the woods was at first welcome to Scranton. As soon as he had reached the house that night, he rummaged among his papers until he found the letter which had come to him at Cairo from Moody's dying bed. He had up till that point stopped, uncertain which direction to take, having come as far as he could on his trail without further advice, and Moody's letter, telling him of his rescue at sea and giving his own reasons for joining the English army in the Sudan, gave him his new start.

Moody on the ship had never known the hand that saved him. The outline of the half-blind trail which he had followed up into the desert had fetched both the man he sought and himself into the campaign. Here Moody became a volunteer nurse, and a useful man attached to the regiment, something between a sutler and a merchant. Following and seeking, scarcely ever resting or sleeping lest Adair should escape his sight, he made his way until the sunstroke knocked him under one afternoon, and he woke up some hours later in the tent of a newspaper correspondent.

He followed to the battle of Ageiga, and, seeking at the hem of the regiment where he believed his enemy to be, Moody told Scranton that he found himself in the thick of the fight, battling with a weapon caught from the

hand of a fallen man, and with his eyes, as he expressed it, peeled for his foe. And as he was fighting he saw Adair, and from then on Scranton had taken Moody's letter for the ravings of a man gone mad after years of brooding and bitterness with the hobby of revenge to help him lose his mind.

Scranton had read of the Hereford charge, and knew that the officer was dead, and that Bill Flanders couldn't possibly be Hereford, couldn't be the man at Ageiga, and that poor Moody had led them both astray, to go off his head at last.

The physical description he had of Flanders was meager at most. Moody had never admired him as a type, and when he had known Bill in Texas, the sheep-driver had worn a full beard. There had been a sole and only designation beside a general description, the mention of a scar; a short, thick scar on Flanders' forehead, under his hair. The greaser's knife had grazed Flanders' skull when he drove it, as Flanders, at the same moment, knifed him to the heart.

Beside the fact that Sydney Adair had been at Halfa, that he was six feet tall, blond, clean-made, strong, and devil-may-care, Scranton had no way of proving that he was the man he sought; beside the fact that Adair had left him summarily on the desert, had preferred to face death rather than remain and let Scranton wake up and speak to him again—beside that fact—Scranton stopped at it, thoughtful.

On the table at Scranton's side was the picture of a young man in the clothes of a miner. The face was surprisingly like his own. They had been twin brothers, inseparable until Henry had gone to Alaska and Robert had remained behind in Kentucky, the sole remaining child of his mother. The murder of her son had killed Mrs. Scranton; she had died of horror and grief.

Left utterly alone by her death, Robert Scranton had brooded until his mind grew sore, until the passion for feud that the Kentuckians know so well stood very strong in him, and he had

sworn on her grave to avenge the double death. He went West, piercing more easily than the others had done the Klondike, to the old camp on Leaping Wolf, and he learned all there was to know. He ran up against Moody, who, like himself, had traveled in for news, for news of his friend and of his wife. The two had made common cause and struck hands over revenge, and set out to hunt Bill Flanders down. Scranton had gathered together every possible detail of the life of the man known as The Blade, and from the first cowboy exploit to the holding up of the Denver bank he had his documents all in hand. He had the government's warrant for Adair's arrest, but he had his own bitter, gloomy score to settle first.

Flanders had disappeared from the face of the continent and it had only been last year that Scranton had turned to look for him in the old world.

He stared moodily at the picture on the table before him, he felt as though Bill Flanders' hand had robbed him of life and home and family. During these days when he had haunted The Lawns, received each time by Helena with kindness and patience, he had in the courtship of the woman put aside his gloomy vows, but now Adair's sudden appearance and the shock of it and his brother's face looking out at him from the photograph recalled his solemn oath; he was hemmed in by vows.

"What would Helena think," he asked himself, "if she knew that my heart harbored such unhappy things? What would she think if she knew that possibly Flanders, whom I am bound to kill, is her fiancé's best friend?"

There was nothing in the world which could have induced Scranton to fetch his slumbering vengeance into that home where his love was, or to bring any shadow across her path. Adair, if he had any connection with Bill Flanders, was safe for the present, at all events, and Scranton said to himself: "As far as I am concerned, until I know my fate there's nothing in heaven or hell but the woman!"

CHAPTER V.

Adair's welcome at The Lawns began with Miss Lucy, and was warmer and more cordial than he had expected from the lady who he knew did not approve of him.

He had ridden up at sunset, some few moments after Helena reached the house, and found the whole family on the piazza; the meeting had been general.

The new guest took the moment when he heard her speak to her aunt to let his eyes rest on Helena. Not an hour before he had seen her sitting between the forest's glory and the sun's glory, and something of the passion and beauty of the nature she had left lingered with her—she was like a radiant autumn flower; dressed in brown from head to foot, she wore around her neck a red scarf whose long ends fell across her shoulder. A red belt wound about her waist, and in it she had thrust a spray of crimson leaves. Each leaf was a red stain at her heart.

As she replied to her aunt, Adair could hear the excitement in her voice, its shake and its vibration, caused by the clamor of her heart at sudden delight. He heard her laugh tremble, and saw her breast rise and fall under the soft folds of her bodice. If the autumn had struck her with its flame, it had called her to life, not to death or anything like inanimation.

He said to himself: "This state of feeling can't last very long, it's beyond human strength to control."

"I shall have no wedding-gift," she told him graciously, "which will please me as yours does. I hope Mustapha will stand the climate; do you think he will? I'll go every day to the stables and spoil him with kindness."

"I think, without doubt, then, he'll stand the climate all right," Adair laughed.

As soon as Maccerdene suggested it, Adair followed him to the rooms prepared for him, and then Maccerdene thrust him in, shut the door, and drew up a couple of chairs to the fire of logs; and when his friend had lit his cig-

arette and poured out his whisky and soda, Roger prepared to reveal his mind.

"It's bully of you to have come down, Sydney! By Gad! It does me good to see your face! And I fancy you'll understand how welcome you are when you hear what I've got to say. I expect you to stand by me—just give me your moral support."

Adair smiled. "Such as my moral support is! What the devil are you up to?"

"I haven't been exceedingly fit, and that's a fact, but I believe a month or two of proper life will set me straight. I'm going to rough it in the Rocky Mountains and do some shooting and live on the plains."

"The deuce!" exclaimed his friend. "That's a curious honeymoon."

"There won't be any honeymoon," Captain Maccerdene returned firmly. "I'm not going to marry my cousin."

His companion put his whisky down by his side. "I expect this is a lovers' quarrel. You'll make up in the course of the evening."

Maccerdene did not directly answer. "I have not yet told my cousin, but now that you've come I'm going to have a talk with her to-night. With the exception of Manners the whole lot of them are against me. But you'll see my reasons. I'm going to give Helena her liberty and leave to-morrow for the West."

"What the devil!"

"She doesn't care for me and she never has. I'm not going to hold any woman against her will, you can understand?"

Maccerdene's words set Adair's own heart free, and this obstacle removed, there was one dishonor spared him. He smoked for a few seconds, and then asked:

"Don't you love your cousin?"

Maccerdene said slowly: "I have cared fearfully for Helena, but I don't love her as I should love another kind of woman. She's hard as ice and almost cruel. She's irritable with me, and she keeps me a mile away from

her; she's spoiled our romance. We were never meant for each other, and our engagement was a great mistake."

He paused, then cried more sincerely: "At any rate, Sydney, she *doesn't* care a hang for me, and she'll laugh with delight when I set her free, and that's the main thing, isn't it? My dear chap, I don't want any woman against her will. And then she knows how to make a man suffer, and I'd have a devil of a time later, that I know."

Adair threw his cigarette into the tray.

"When you say that she knows how to make a man suffer," he said good-humoredly, "you mean that you've been jealous about her. That's what's the matter. Now, who are you jealous of, old fellow?"

"I've told you all I have to say, Sydney," answered Maccerdene. "I'm not the only chap in Kentucky," he added sharply, "and God knows I don't want to see any more *Southern gentlemen* for the rest of my life."

He rose from his chair. "How would you take it if a man came every day to see the woman you were going to marry, rode with her, drove with her, walked with her, flirted with her, before your very eyes!"

"I'd shoot him," said his companion slowly.

Roger laughed harshly. "Well, you're a cowboy. Englishmen don't pigstick like that or fight duels with bounders."

"You're breaking your engagement in a jealous fit," Adair said quietly. "Your feelings will change when you talk to your cousin." After a second he said: "What kind of a man is Mr. Scranton?"

"A dreary icicle," said the boy petulantly, "a commonplace pedant, a silent, morose bounder—"

In spite of himself Adair laughed heartily. "Oh, you needn't go on," he said, "it's not quite fair. If he's half the man you say, I'll finish the picture for myself."

"Oh, he's an interesting chap," Roger said sneeringly, "my aunt adores him,

and so does the whole household. He's rich and respectable, he's running for Congress or for some one of their offices. I dare say he'll be the next President. As far as I'm concerned," he added, with bitter resentment, "he can run to hell!

"She may marry Scranton to-morrow, Adair," continued the boy, "I give you my word. And only let me get out of the way for a while and breathe a breath of Western air and I'll come back and dance at the wedding."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed his friend. "Don't pose like this, you're not serious in half you say. I came to dance at your wedding and I'll be hanged if I'll dance at Scranton's."

"That's right," nodded Maccerdene, with satisfaction. "Come along to the Rockies with me and get a bearskin."

"You think she cares for Scranton?"

It cost Adair a great effort to ask this; he wished he hadn't, directly after, then he waited.

Roger returned rather brutally: "Why, she couldn't stand him unless she cared for him. I tell you he's here six hours or more out of the twenty-four, and he's persona grata with them all."

Adair reflected: "I don't quite understand your aunt's position in this."

"Oh, Aunt Lucy's all right," the boy exclaimed loyally, "she believes in fair play all round."

"She doesn't seem to have given it to you, Roger."

"Yes, she has," said the boy gravely, "it's all my field, and if another chap takes it, why, it's because I've not been strong enough to keep it. And, as I said to you before, I don't intend to marry a reluctant woman, not if I remain an old bachelor all my days. You see," he said more reasonably, "I believe now that we both were too near of kin and that we went into it too hastily. I have been jealous of her and I've suffered, but it's over too quickly to be real love. All I want to do now is to get away and forget. She's a disgraceful flirt, Sydney, and I don't understand that kind of a woman!"

CHAPTER VI.

After dinner, Adair followed Miss Maccerdene into the drawing-room, and, sitting at her side by the fire, coffee and liqueur between them, he began, at her request, to tell her how he had ridden down through the States. He had been talking some time before he realized that Miss Desprey and Roger had not come into the room. He fancied that the fiancés had stopped behind the others, and that not very far from Miss Maccerdene and himself, as they sat peacefully talking together, the young Englishman was making personal history.

"I came through the forest some three or four miles back," he went on, "when I ran up against a man whom I had known a little in South Africa—Bob Scranton. What kind of a chap is he?"

Aunt Lucy held a fan between her delicate cheek and the fire. "A good type of Southern gentleman. Do you know it, Mr. Adair?"

"Yes, and I don't think there's any finer article in America."

Miss Lucy took his praise coolly. "I think so myself," she said, "but I am no doubt prejudiced."

And Adair said under his breath: "She champions Scranton. This is hard luck."

"We met Robert Scranton on the Nile for the first time," Miss Maccerdene went on. "He hadn't been in Kentucky for several years. His past here was so tragic he ran away from his associations."

Miss Lucy settled herself, opening and shutting her little fan, and the pattern of her and the work and fabric of her were as fine and exquisite as the flowers in the old lace web.

"There were two brothers in the Scranton family, Henry and Robert; they were twins and very united all their lives. Henry went up into Alaska some time before the Klondike craze, and there he was foully murdered."

Adair leaned forward to throw back a long log that had rolled out on the andirons.

"His mother was as sweet a soul as ever drew breath, Mr. Adair, a timid creature whose world was in her two sons. The news of poor Henry's death and the way in which he died killed her. She lived only a month afterward, and this double tragedy left Robert alone."

Adair said quietly: "You speak warmly of Scranton."

"I would be proud to have him for my son." The spinster looked at Adair, and he saw keenly and quickly all that she meant. What in heaven's name could Scranton have done to win her praise? Adair was jealous of his enemy; even this white-haired woman made him jealous of those qualities which stamped the other man as a man of honor and as a gentleman.

Miss Desprey had come in and alone. She crossed the room to the far end, and Miss Maccerdene asked her to sing. Helena began at once to play among the strings of her harp, and Adair, drawing his chair back a little from under the scrutiny of the old lady's eyes, sat back to listen.

"This Southern gentlewoman," he reflected, "would be proud to have Scranton for her son." Scranton could bring into this household nothing that would disturb its peace. Scranton was the type of the Southern gentleman. Adair knew there was no woman in the world to say that she would be proud to own him for her son! He had never known but two good women, and they were with him under this kindly roof, and they would shrink from him if they knew.

He dismissed the thought of his hostess and her prejudices and her moral heights, and he thought of Helena only, and his sins slipped from him at her name. Now her voice which he liked to think was singing directly to him came like an answer to one of the many summons which he had made to the woman these lonely months. But, near her as he was, the weight upon him did not slip away, and he felt hampered, bound and burdened; he understood why. He wasn't fit to breathe the air she breathed. Marry her? Give

her his detested name of *Flanders*? He couldn't do that. Give her the name he had been born with and which he had forever disgraced? Make her one with a man out of prison only because he was not found? Ask her to share the part of a criminal eluding justice? In God's name, what *was* he doing here? Even if, as far as he knew how, he had cleaned up his past, not one jot or tittle of the original facts was changed.

Adair felt in his bitter musing that if he still owed a debt to Scranton, a debt against his ruined household and his mother's grave, he could pay it up in some measure now. The only good he could fetch to this woman's life was to leave her environment as soon as he might, as he had done before, and before it should be too late.

And yet, wouldn't it prove him a weak fool if he should relinquish this woman? Or would it prove him possessed of the greatest strength of all, of the highest a man can know?

"Be ye removed and cast into the sea, into the midst of the sea," Would it be better, after all, to possess a faith to move mountains rather than a will to wreck a woman's life?

He sat face to face with this crisis, the fight between passion and love, and determined to settle it now before he left this room. Maccerdene had set her free, she was free for him as for another man, to love, to marry, to take for his own. And, as he faced this moment, as he fought with his soul against the senses that called for her, as he tried to keep back the blood that sang to her, and the desire that demanded her, he cried out to himself:

"Oh, I'm paying it all in full, mind you—mind you, in full, damn you! And if I get out of this and leave the field to Scranton, why, there's no worse hell for me anywhere, here or hereafter."

He sat for some time in his corner bowed over like an old man, with no one to see or mark his battle and no one to notice how red the scar burned over his pale brow.

Adair had been the only son of a gen-

tleman farmer, a Highlander, a man of small means and of fierce, brutal passions, whose interests beyond his little son and his few head of cattle and his miniature rent-roll had consisted of sentimental victories and hard drink. Mrs. Adair was his monumental victim, his supreme conquest, and in spite of the fact that he beat her and that his infidelities had made her the laughing-stock of the neighborhood, she loved the brute still, loved him above her pride and her bruises, and even above her only boy. But the son did not recognize this, they were much to each other and he worshiped his mother, stood her champion, and, once, coming in between her and a blow, received it, and was thereafter an added thorn in his father's flesh and pursued by his humors.

His escape from the long, unlovely years of his childhood came when Sydney went to Edinburgh to school. He had been seventeen on his return from the Christmas holidays, and in a furious winter storm, had come back into the bleak environment of the winter country and into the scant, grudging welcome of his father and his mother's timid embraces. He found her wan and ailing; her meager, threadbare existence went to his warm, impressionable heart, and he tried to fetch to her something of the sunshine of his scapegrace and happier life in the school and something of the freedom of the town he had known. Mother and son grew close in the holidays, and more and more Sydney saw and understood the desperate misery of her life.

He hated his father, his brutish indulgence sickened him. More than once his father struck him, and once he beat him like a dog, and the boy bore it for his mother's sake, in her presence. But there came a night when he bore it for the last time.

The woman at the gardener's house was a widow, a pretty creature of some twenty years of age, and the day before Christmas she had come to the house and wept and poured forth the story of her distress, whose tragedy was an old tale to the betrayed woman;

but the cruel indifference to her honor harmed and hurt her still. Taunted, pricked, no doubt, by the woman's youth and beauty, which did much wrong to her own faded years and pale cheeks, the ruined wife turned at last upon her husband, and as he came in cried out against him. Then the brute in the man rose to its full stature and turned in all its fury upon the boy, Sydney, who had sat during the interview between his mother and the gardener's wife; and during his father's entrance, with his book, by the lamp. The miserable man accused his son, before them all, as the author of the woman's ill. He opened the door and drove Sydney out into the snow and the night.

Then, over the wife's pleas and tears, he struck her, and at her cry the boy sprang back to his mother, but he was no match for the vigorous man, and over the blows and curses he could hear his mother's voice: "Go, Sydney, go, my darling, before he kills you!" And flung out, kicked out, struck out, as it were, with a slander upon his name, the boy found himself sobbing, bruised, bleeding, and homeless, without his own door-step in the December storm. He never saw his mother again.

He worked his way to the nearest seaport and stoked on a sailing vessel to Canada, and went West with the tide. He changed his name to Flanders in hatred for the name which his father had made dishonorable and heaped with new dishonor. And for some time, bitter against his wrongs, his injustice, and his fate, he played fast and loose with his life.

But Sydney Adair had been born with his mother's Irish nature, which in misfortune kept its ring and its metal, and he took heart again finally and began a cheerful, sanguine existence, with something of the outcast in him and more of the outlaw, and his kindly generosity never changed. Morals troubled him not at all, a common dishonor had thrust him into the world, and he laid hold of everything that could bring him even a fleeting joy. The fortune of the new world was with him, and he became famous as The

Blade, road-agent and highwayman, robber of trains and banks, and as The Blade he led the company of cowboys against the government and held all the towns and the trails and the regions around captive and prisoner until the insurrection was put down.

He was new to Texas when he was obliged to leave the Western States, and there he fell in with Moody and had driven sheep with him across the plains of San José. He had thrown up the road-game definitely and the outlaw game, and he had determined to make a living out of this sheep trade, like an honest man.

At this point of his reflections Adair pulled aside the curtain before him a little and looked out into the fine old room, with its mellow, peaceful, honest past, at the old lady in her chair, her smooth white hair around her delicate, serene face, and her tranquil hands folded in her lap. There were no stains here, no blots on these escutcheons, not a shade of dishonor or a breath of ill-fame. The only thing out of line and out of order was Adair himself, a hunted man, a social pariah; if they knew, a marked man, marked by a fellow creature, who, within twenty miles of him to-night, thought of him with intent to kill.

What, he half argued to himself, had been his crimes, after all? Things done in a country where many of the laws of the different States were at war. He couldn't be put in jail to-day for the Denver hold-up. Why?

He smoked tranquilly, and then blew out in the wreath his answer: Because for the last four months the bank in Colson, robbed by a single masked man some fifteen years before, had been paid in full for the sum stolen, penny for penny, with accrued interest. It had been quite a big sum out of Adair's fortune. Papers of release, signed by the National Bank of Colson, had set him—as far as their account went—free.

The transaction had been carried on sub rosa, and no one would ever know where he was.

Between the States of Colorado and

California, during the last four months, Adair had divided the sum of two million dollars to expend in charities, to clean up, as far as he could, the faro page, as he expressed it, to wipe that transaction out of his life.

Then the question of Tom Moody came. Well, that was a very long story! Several rings of smoke floated up, and there was no answer sent through them. Tom Moody's Irish family in Cork had another little fortune, and he had twice saved Moody's life, prolonged it just long enough for Moody to put Scranton on Adair's track.

"If I had let Moody rot in the Sudan," he mused, "I don't believe there would have been anything to fear down here to-night. If Moody should come back with the woman by his side, would he find his score cleaned up?"

Adair smoked and smoked, and did not answer the question, but he looked less sinister and despairing.

The cowboy attack on the soldiers, led by him, instigated by him; well, that had been a very miserable affair. There had been a gallant officer killed then, and Adair's bullet, as well as several others, had lodged under the uniform. The State and the government were dead against him. He had taken the brunt of the raid and the insurrection, and the only warrant still out was against Bill Flanders. Was that warrant outlawed now, after fifteen years? A legacy from an unknown benefactor had left the officer's widow rich beyond her dream. And Adair had rather subtly wondered if his unclaimed victory at Ageiga, if his own laurels could not be laid upon that officer's grave.

Every life he had saved since that day, Maccerdene's life saved twice by him, Moody's saved twice by him, he set against this officer's score. This was the only thing he regretted, the only death which brought him remorse. Was he still good for State's prison, if nothing worse? He had tried to solve this problem when in the West, but the risk was too great, and he was not sure—

Here he stopped for a few seconds in

the perusal of his chasing, chasing, chasing thoughts; he was trying to cleanse himself in his own eyes. He stopped to listen to Helena. At the last note of her song he picked up his threads again. They had brought him to Scranton. Well—— The row of shacks rose along the Leaping Wolf as he thought, Henry Scranton's shack stood out with deadly clearness against the dawn. So he had seen it the morning when he went out, dragging the woman down the frozen river, on the race for their lives.

His face was set hard against mercy and pity or any shade of regret. Robert Scranton himself might be a demigod, down here in the South; if so, he had all the good of both brothers, *that* was certain. For his twin had been a white-livered hound. Adair seemed to go down the frozen stream again, across the passes, over the mountains, and through the gorge, to the bay; sometimes dragging the woman, sometimes carrying the woman, warming her in arms that loathed her, feeding her from a hand that could have struck her, nursing her mercifully, tending her, encouraging her; he relived the weeks again, as he sat down in Kentucky in the colonial room of The Lawns, he went once again over the pass that fetched Mary Moody and himself to safety. Then he shook himself and breathed deeply as if he still felt the weight of her clinging to him for life—for the life she seemed to have sucked out of him, for it was as though she had eaten away his very soul!

Under his mustache Adair laughed softly.

"I'm not *sure* that I haven't paid up even old man Moody to the full! And as for Scranton, here"—he smoked furiously, knocking off the ash on the cushion at his side—well, if Scranton had made that five weeks' trail with a woman as *he* had made it, he guessed that Scranton would set any chap free afterward.

Over the warm, delicious fragrance of this room, he could smell again the dead, sickening odor of the frozen fields of snow, the pure dreadful smell

of the eternal cold, and see Mary Moody's face turned up to him with the horror on it and the fear.

"Tom Moody," he mentally put to his old pal, as he thought, "tell me if I didn't pay up fair and square, old man, fair and square."

CHAPTER VII.

The engagement of Roger Maccerdene and Helena Desprey was definitely broken; and Roger had departed with his friend, Manners, for the West.

After announcing the news to Robert Scranton, Miss Lucy Maccerdene said gently:

"Robert, I think you love my niece."

Scranton looked up at her with great gratitude, a great appeal on his face.

"Yes," she nodded, "yes, I hope you will win her, with all my heart."

He made a low exclamation, and seized the delicate old hand gently, as though he feared to crush it, then he let it fall again.

"Don't speak to Helena, yet," Miss Maccerdene breathed. "Oh, you have spoken, I know, but I mean don't speak again just now. Wait, it's too soon. She's just free from one bond, and she will revel in her freedom. Be patient, be patient!"

But the next day after this advice Scranton was called by a wire to New York, and poor Aunt Lucy groaned when she read her note that told her the news.

"What a fool," she exclaimed, with unexpected severity, "what a mistake! If men only knew what women know as well, how it would help them in their love-affairs."

Helena sat with the sole guest at The Lawns in the library, the red fireplace between them.

"Tell me," she persisted, "won't you, something about the West and about yourself?"

Adair, who was smoking, leaned forward. "You want to be interested, don't you? You want an adventure?"

"I want to hear something of you."

As she spoke to him a desire seized

him to tell his life. Every man and woman knows this dangerous temptation, the want to confess, to speak of one's self to another, to put one's self, *if only once in a lifetime*, before the eyes of the person one loves supremely.

Rolling his cigarette softly between his fingers, he said: "You want an adventure, don't you? I'll tell you about a fellow I knew. His name was Bill Flanders. Shall I tell you about him?"

She was too wise to suggest anything to a man who knew his own mind as thoroughly as Adair did, so she nodded and thought to herself: "He's going to tell me his own story; he shall tell it as he likes."

Adair told her of the Highland home, of his desolate boyhood, his stormy departure; then followed the story of his stoking on the vessel at sea, of the passing of the iceberg, and here Adair, glancing at his auditor for the first time, saw that her eyes had filled with tears. He exclaimed ardently: "Don't, or I sha'n't be able to go on."

Then he laughed shortly. "Flanders, poor devil, isn't worth tears. Wait, and you'll see that I'm right."

But she protested gently: "He wrings my heart, I pity him."

She was one to whom a man might dare speak his heart, to talk out his soul, knowing that he would be understood, but from here on he was merciless to Flanders.

Her charity seemed boundless as he talked, and he told her many things he could not have found words to say to any other person in the world. As he talked, her mercy seemed to lave the man of whom he spoke. She seemed to pardon him as, one by one, Adair put Flanders' misdeeds before her. Even after his description of the lawless road-agent's life, of the outlaw's existence, he had not wrung from her one word of blame.

Nevertheless, there had been terrible shocks in the recital, but she bore them, and Adair did not see her quiver, solely and simply because the support she leaned against was so very strong. She leaned against her love for him,

and so far not one breath had made it tremble.

Adair took her then to Texas, and side by side she walked with him across the salt, villainous, dreadful plains.

"Then the fever struck Moody." And Adair went on to say how they had come to the mission house, and how he left Moody and started in to San José. Inside San José, at the threshold of Mrs. Moody's door, Adair paused. He waited indeed so long that Helena finally asked:

"You're keeping me breathless with suspense. Aren't you going on?"

And Adair replied slowly: "I suppose that I am, I guess it's too late to stop. But I'm holding up, to give you a long chance."

"A long chance for what?"

"Why, to gather all together that mighty charity of yours," he said, smiling at her. "Bill will need it from now right on."

In his quick look there was an appeal. She grew deadly pale. The storyteller gave a last pull at his cigarette and threw it into the fire, and he did not light another before the close of his narrative.

"Mary Moody was about thirty-five years of age at that time. She had been a governess in an English family who had traveled West, and she had left them to marry Moody and to set herself free from work and drudgery. She was a very good sort," Adair said, "and very clever, and she fell in love with Flanders and he fell in love with her."

For the first time Adair's listener interrupted him.

"He fell in love with her, you say?"

And Adair answered firmly: "Madly. It's his only excuse for the deviltry that ensued. At the end of the week the man and the woman left together and made tracks for the unknown, as it were; they went up into Alaska, long before the Klondike boom."

Miss Desprey asked: "Why? Why?"

"Because," said Adair, "they heard that poor Moody, tired of waiting for help from his wife and friend, had

started in for San José and they didn't feel like being on hand to meet him."

She asked insistently: "They took his money with them?"

"They took his money with them," Sydney answered.

"Oh," she breathed, "his friend's wife and his friend's living!"

Helena Desprey sank back in her chair, into the shadow, and from it her face, whose misery cut him to the quick, looked whitely out at him.

"She'll hate me now," he thought, "she'll hate me now, all right. Over everything else *this* is doing the work; she can't forgive."

He passed quickly over the first year at the Leaping Wolf camp and changed every name so that she couldn't know.

"When he came back from Frisco, he found that the woman had sold Moody's securities and fetched in the stuff. Flanders hadn't any desire to fall in with Moody when he went back to San Francisco the second time, as you might suppose, but he couldn't understand the fact that Tom was begging his way, living on the charity of any one he might meet, for the money Flanders supposed to have been sent in should have been ample to fetch him in style. All the journey up, along the river and across the snow-fields, Bill Flanders wondered and guessed and ruminated, and when he saw the woman again he put it to her, and she told him the truth. Theft is theft in this world, whether it's money or a man's wife, and I guess he judged that Moody would hold them about equal. Mary Moody told him the amount, and he noted it down, and never spoke of it to her again. He sent the money with interest to date to the bank where Moody should find it when he turned up, but Moody was a sport, and he wouldn't touch a penny of it, and when Flanders knew this, he understood that Moody considered the theft of his wife to be the biggest steal, after all."

Adair's hands were clasped between his knees, and his eyes were fixed on them. Strong and muscular and well-kept, they were beautiful hands, slender, brown-skinned, with oval nails

where the red shone through the fine-polished mirrors. He turned his clear blue eyes and his grave face upon Helena. "Shall I go on?" he asked. "Are you bored?"

She could only motion to him, she could not speak.

"No doubt," Adair said, "Flanders had done wrong in leaving Mary Moody alone up there, in Alaska; it was a great deal to ask of a woman, to bear that isolation. But men are queer, they expect miracles from the woman, while on their parts they are not up to the most every-day transactions. At any rate, he was bitterly jealous and infuriated when he came back and found that she had flirted in his absence with one of his comrades in the camp. He gave her a very unhappy time, Miss Desprey; and he hurt his foot badly just about then and was shut up in the house for a week like a caged bear, and it wasn't all a holiday for the poor girl."

"You pity her?" asked the voice from across the fireplace.

And Sydney glanced up at the tone of sharpness so unusual in the gentle voice.

"Yes," he said, "with all my heart."

"Don't ask *me* to pity her," said Miss Desprey quickly.

"I do not ask you," he returned quietly, "I ask you for nothing for either of them; they were criminals, and I don't know why I tell you this story, you are so far removed from such as they."

She cried out then: "Oh, go on; please, please don't speak so."

"I think," he said, "that you will be sorry for her, nevertheless, before the end, and I don't see how you could help it. Shut up there with Flanders for ten days, caring for him as best she knew how, a very strange thing happened. In spite of the fact that Bill Flanders blamed her and accused her to himself and in violent scenes with her—indeed, I've sometimes thought just because of this state of affairs, the woman grew for the first to really love the man; I mean to say that she had never cared for Flanders *until then*—

she had followed him, heaven knows why—she was afraid of him, and she was more afraid of him now, at the time I'm telling you of. He was so angry with her, so cruel with her in those days, but she bore his upbraidings and his brutalities with wonderful patience.

"The woman grew more and more afraid of her friend," Adair continued. "She was afraid that if he ever really grew to know what had passed between her and a certain man in the camp that he would kill her. She was sure that he would leave her, at any rate. It seems that during his absence Mary Moody, in God knows what weak moment of passion, had told the other man a pack of lies about Flanders, whose sins were black enough, but she told to him things that Flanders had told to her, things that would ruin him, give him away to the government and end his days, if they were ever known. And then she told the other man that Flanders had fetched to her the news of Moody's death, had speculated with Moody's funds, had induced her, with his trickeries, into following him, and that she was sick of him. Primed with this, the man in the other shack had told it all to the boys in the camp, and at six o'clock on that morning a posse of them were coming up to put the question to Flanders, and if they discovered he was the hound she made him out to be, why, it wouldn't have been any waltz tune for him, Miss Desprey. Mary Moody had soured on the other man as soon as Flanders came home; she hated him as she grew to love Bill, and had one dreadful haunting fear that Flanders would find out the whole thing and turn her down.

"Flanders, as I told you, had a bad foot, and one night he was restless and feverish, and Mary Moody gave him a draft of some mixture, which was warranted to make him sleep for several hours, sound as the dead. But this time the powder didn't work, he only dozed off, and woke again at length, jumped up, wide-awake, when the door of the cabin banged to with the wind. He found that he was alone in his shack, and he crawled out of bed on his

hands and knees as far as the door. He waited a little while, not daring to move or breathe lest he might burst a blood-vessel in his head, he was so angry with the creature who had played him false—at this time, too, when he was too crippled to take his part. He managed after a little to get on some clothes, and it was slow work; he felt for his pistols, but could find only one, and stuck it in his belt and crawled down to the other man's cabin on his hands and knees.

"Flanders pushed open the door and drew himself up by its lintel and stood there, and then he went in. The room was perfectly quiet, there wasn't a sound in it, and Mary Moody didn't stir, either; it seemed as if she had been waiting for Bill to come for her. She was standing so close by the door when he went in that he almost touched her. The other man was quiet on his bed, it seemed as though he hadn't heard either of them come in, and as though he hadn't waked at all. After a little while Flanders took Mary Moody by the arm and led her out, and she helped him up the hill. It was about three o'clock in the morning, I think," Adair went on, "about three, when they got to our—Flanders' shack."

Then Adair went on to tell her in a few words the visit of the boys at dawn, and of the camp's decision.

Helena's eyes, which had been fixed steadfastly upon him as he spoke, read him through and through, and her lips parted, as though more than once she would have cried out. But she remained motionless, listening as he told her how they went away and how he dragged the woman across the ice. At the close they both sat very quiet, and the room, whose walls had never heard such tragedy and sin before, grew eloquent to both of them, and became a shelter for sorrow, for grief, and despair.

In the deepening twilight the fire had died down to a pile of radiant ashes, into which the last veillike flakes of the wood gusts fell soft as snow. Adair watched them melt away, pa-

tiently waiting for the woman to make some sign. He felt himself to be before her judgment-bar. At length she left her chair, and as she rose Sydney saw that she could scarcely stand.

"No, no, please," she cried, as he came toward her, "don't, don't touch me!" She shrank from him. "I can go alone, I want to be alone."

She made her way feebly toward the door and out of it, and Adair, standing there, after his confession in which he had laid his soul bare, felt like a penitent who has been refused absolution. Thrusting his hands down in his pockets, he stood staring at the lifeless hearth.

She condemned him, she despised, dreaded, feared him. Well, he had

done what he intended to do, and it had all worked out for the best for her. Wasn't it what he wanted? Hadn't he told his story for this? Now that he had disenchanted and set her free, what had he to complain of? He had heaped on Flanders' head theft, adultery, and murder, and he had expected her to greet his story with a smile? He was a proper outcast in her eyes, a criminal. He laughed softly, and, running his hand through his hair, lifted its blond lock above the greaser's scar and above the red line of the Sudanese wound.

"The love of women," he said, "a woman's love—well, I guess I'm not ready to pass my checks in yet, for I've sworn to find it before I die."

TO BE CONCLUDED.



THE DREAM-MAN

OH, what does the Dream-Man mean,
And why does he wave his wand?
Afar where the tussocks lean
He walks on the plain unseen,
And calls to the night beyond.

The moon is beringed and pale—
With only the Dream-Man's eyes
To guide o'er the slender trail!
And what if their light should fail,
Away where the shadows rise?

He plays on a wondrous reed,
And deep are the spells he weaves;
In vain may ye kneel and plead—
Who follow the Dream-Man's lead,
And fall by the way he leaves.

He tarries his steps for none,
But the gleam of his somber eyes—
Oh, dearly their glance is won!—
Is more than the stars and the sun,
And all the light o' the skies.

Aloud from the distant sea
And low from a far-off range,
He calls to the soul of me,
And plays in an unknown key
A song in a rhythm strange.

LOLA RIDGE.

AROUND THE BRIDGE TABLE



*By Arthur
Loring Bruce*



AN international card-player was once asked, in his club, if he could name an ideal partner at bridge. For a long time he went over in his mind the endless procession of men that he had played with in the smoky club card-room and finally answered:

"No! There isn't such a thing. An ideal partner, one without hateful mannerisms and annoying idiosyncrasies, is, like perpetual motion or the limit of space, inconceivable. There is not a known specimen in the British Museum in London or in the Smithsonian Institute at Washington."

A peppery, red-faced old gentleman, who was reading a racing-guide in the corner of the library and smoking a long, black cigar, was then appealed to. His face assumed an added crimson when the question was propounded to him.

"Yes," he said, after a pause, "I knew one in Bombay. Stop a minute, though; I remember now that he had an infernal habit of whistling while he played a winning hand."

A third gentleman declared that he didn't know much about it, but if there were such a freak of nature he was absolutely certain that it *wasn't* a woman.

Let us now go over in my mind all the *bad* partners we have ever met. The assembly is, naturally, a large one. Rabelais' celebrated list of games is as nothing to it. Homer's catalogue of the ships sinks into pitiful insignificance beside it. For purposes of ref-

erence, let us number the better-known types—up to thirty, thus:

(1) The lady who has forgotten her purse but will surely send you a check to-morrow—if she can only remember it.

(2) The telephone fiend who really would not dream of interrupting the rubber, but, "as this is a long-distance call, I really ought to go—so you will please excuse me, won't you?"

(3) The man who is constantly calling for fresh cards or changing his seat, walking three times around his chair, or placing some magic charm on the table beside him.

(4) The ruminative animal who gazes intently at the ceiling when it is his turn to play, as if seeking inspiration from some invisible Yogi, or else listening to the call of some tuneful bird hidden in the branches of a gigantic tree.

(5) The whistler, hummer, tapper, kicker, swayer, and drummer.

(6) The hog who pounces into the seat to the left of the dealer so as to rob his partner of the first deal.

(7) The man who will *never* stop playing. This gentleman is a first cousin to the man who refuses to play more than one rubber.

(8) The gloomy creature or fatalist who is always pursued by bad luck, who tells you heartbreaking things about his poor cards, and remains plunged in despair until the wretched agony is over.

(9) The woman who "perks" up when she has a good hand—laughs, chats, and makes merry.

(10) The so-called gentleman who writhes, groans, or turns in his chair

when his partner leads a card that does not fit in with his particular hand.

(11) The idiot who sprawls on the table and holds his cards so that every one must see them.

(12) The man who always wants to know the score—and his three brothers: The first who insists on looking back at the last trick and examining it carefully as though every card were new to him; the second who always asks the trump; and the third who incessantly wants to know whether or not the trick is against him.

(13) The .tea-and-muffin crank who wants to play bridge, tell a story, smoke a cigar, butter a crumpet, read the paper, and drink tea at one and the same time—with only one mouth and a single pair of hands.

(14) The "gifted" player who has never read a book on bridge, does not know the leads, and simply plays by "common sense."

(15) The cataleptic trance-medium who refuses to play until he has rubbed his forehead and until eons of time have rolled their torpid lengths into the abysses of eternity.

(16) The nagger. This gentleman is usually an arguer, bristler, growler, and gloater, as well as a "naggleton."

(17) The curious maiden who, when dummy, insists upon peeking at the hands of the leader and third hand.

(18) The person who hesitates unduly before making the trump or before doubling the make.

(19) The tricky and artful player, who overfinesses, leads false cards, and, by his craft, leaves you absolutely in the dark as to what he really holds.

(20) The selfish animal who plays only for his own hand and *never* for yours.

(21) The doubter, who always watches you as you jot down the score to make sure that he is not being rooked or done out of his honors.

(22) The being—usually a woman—who inevitably claims an honor or two that she did not hold.

(23) The "book" player who plays entirely by rules—usually rules that

don't happen to govern the hand at issue.

(24) The fiend who doubles spades on nothing.

(25) The fingerer. This strange creature has a curious habit of pulling out a card, putting it back in his hand, pulling it out again, putting it back, etc., *ad infinitum*.

(26) The man who can't count thirteen. There are half a million school-children in New York who can count thirteen, but only a very few card-players are similarly blessed.

(27) The belligerent, defiant, excitable, and warlike partner who has blood in his eye and is out to do serious damage to his adversaries.

(28) The partner who, even if you make a grand slam, is sure to point out a way by which you could have gained another trick.

(29) The agreeable partner. As we have pointed out in the beginning of this article, this is a purely mythical creature, like a unicorn or a minotaur.

And finally there is (30), the depraved wretch who, as soon as he catches you in a revoke, leans over the table and grabs three tricks from your pile without asking your pardon or permission. It is related that King Canute had a courtier hanged for checkmating him at chess. What would the seashore king have done to *this* ignoble creature? Boiling in oil is too blissful and fragrant a death.

It is certain that bridge is the supreme test of breeding. If you ever are fortunate enough, dear reader, to come upon a pleasant partner at bridge, you may be certain that he is a man of breeding, of good family, of gentle birth, and of unimpeachable manners. Curiously enough, many men of breeding are insufferable partners, but it is also true that they are more often agreeable partners than those men who have not had similar advantages in birth and training.

The word "etiquette" was, it seems, not known to Doctor Johnson. I may add that it is practically unknown, to this day, at the bridge-table. Some one has wisely said that all bridge-partners

are idiots, while only a few of them are gentlemen.

As to etiquette, I take the liberty of pointing out to the bridge boor that it is hardly good form:

(1) To hesitate unduly when he has a good hand, a hand that is nearly a no-trumper, and then pass it over to dummy.

(2) To draw a card from his hand before it is his turn to play.

(3) To revoke a second time in order to hide his first revoke.

(4) To claim any honor that he did not hold.

(5) To bridle and chuckle with a good hand or to sigh and groan with a bad.

(6) To jump into the first dealer's seat.

(7) To try and raise the table-stakes when the remaining three players are satisfied with them.

(8) To hesitate in his play in order to show his partner that he might have played differently, and perhaps with as good results.

(9) To hesitate, when third hand, about doubling a no-trump make, simply because he has a good heart suit. Penalty—ten days at hard labor.

(10) To slap a card on the table as if to say to his partner: "There! *That's* the suit I wanted."

(11) To writhe in his chair when his partner has led an unfortunate suit, as if he were being tortured by the red-hot irons of the Inquisition.

(12) To make remarks about the play of a hand when he is merely an onlooker.

(13) To claim the rest of the tricks until such a claim is beyond dispute.

(14) To play a winning card, and then immediately draw out another card from his hand as if to say: "Partner! *That's* the best! Don't trump it."

(15) To frown or sigh or groan when he has drawn an indifferent partner. Penalty—thirty days.

(16) To ridicule or gloat over the misplays of his adversaries.

(17) To reach over and grab three tricks for a revoke from the revoker's stack. Maximum penalty.

A nice sense of honor and a kindly consideration of the feelings of others will suggest, to any well-bred player, scores of other points to avoid, but the above are some of the most glaring instances of bad taste constantly seen at the bridge-table. It is really surprising to note how often a partner will fail to observe some vital point of etiquette at bridge.

Partners are, as a rule, like the insane. They are sane except on one subject, but on that subject they are hopeless, perverted, incurable. I know one very charming player who, in every point, respects the feelings of others; nobody could be more well-bred and delightful, but, so soon as the cards are placed in the wrong position for the next deal, he becomes petulant and aggressive, and his wrath is unappeasable.

In private life we do not tell our friends and acquaintances of their trifling weaknesses and shortcomings.

We do not say: "Bessie, you are a very stupid woman," "George, you are deucedly bad-tempered," "Harry, you are a brainless idiot," but in bridge it sometimes seems as though our only object were to browbeat our friends, wound their feelings, brutalize, and badger them on every occasion. We all have our faults at bridge. My own particular vice is to throw the cards on the floor and call for fresh packs. I also have a tendency to be a little sullen during my moments of bad luck. But we should earnestly strive to improve and be as the saints are—"blameless and without guile."

There are two or three little anecdotes connected with bad partners which are, perhaps, worth quoting, as they contain a certain modicum of humor.

To begin with, there are two stories about the first division—as arranged in my list of horrors and abominations—the lady who has forgotten to bring her purse.

I once played with such an one for a few rubbers, and we, as partners, had lost about six dollars each. Knowing her failing and hoping to head off her demand for a loan, I asked her, half

humorously, if she had any money to lend me, as I, unfortunately, was without funds. Her only answer was to look at me quizzically, smile, and exclaim merrily: "Chicane!"

The second story is like unto it. I had won twenty-seven dollars from a very rich woman, who had made the usual remarks about her purse, a check to follow to-morrow, "so sorry," etc.

"But," she added thoughtfully, "I want you to give me a memorandum of the amount, and, if I forget to send it to you immediately, I want you to promise me that you will remind me of it."

I smilingly assented. Sad weeks rolled by. "Nit check," as the late Mr. Baxter would have said.

One evening, at the opera, the same charming lady told me a terrible scandal about a man who owed her fifteen dollars at bridge. Now twenty-seven dollars is not a very large amount, but, when it is owed to you at cards, it assumes, somehow, gigantic proportions. I thought of my lady's request to be reminded, and laughingly told her that she herself had owed me nearly twice fifteen dollars for six weeks! Mortification, dismay, horror, and doubt were all flashed at me from those lovely, innocent eyes! She finally explained that there *must* be some mistake, as she remembered writing me a letter in which her check had been enclosed. To cut the story short, I told her that, while she had once owed me twenty-nine dollars, I was sure that I would find her letter and the check among the papers on my desk.

The next day, to my horror and despair, I received a letter from her dated six weeks back, together with a check similarly dated, and a little note explaining that the letter and check, though written ages since, had lodged in a corner of her portfolio. "And," she added, "you will see by *your own* memorandum that the amount was not twenty-nine dollars, but twenty-seven dollars."

I had misquoted the amount by two dollars, and I can't help suspecting that

the lovely lady to this day believes me to be a rascal.

There is, in Pittsburg, a lady whose only failing at bridge is that she constantly claims to have held the ten-spot of trumps, when the honor score is under discussion.

It is a sort of obsession with her. The claimant's name is Rebecca X. Her little subterfuge is so well known in Pittsburg that this particular honor is always called, among her circle of intimates, "the Rebecca."

"I had ace, king, queen, jack; who had the Rebecca?" Such remarks as this are frequently heard in Pittsburg, and I have even heard the term used in Atlantic City. Soon it may be prevalent in Cleveland—and perhaps all over the country.

There is one kind of a partner that I have made no mention of in this article, as his type is, fortunately, rare. I mean the cheat. There is a special ban and blight that rests upon a man who cheats at cards. It is the one unforgivable sin. A man may beat his wife or refuse to support his children, but if he peeks at bridge he is lost, just as in England a man may owe his tailor or his bootmaker, but he is effectively ostracized if he owes money at cards.

Perhaps the most famous scandal connected with cheating at whist in all of English history is the celebrated case of Lord de Ros. At the time of the furore, following the exposure, Lord Hertford was asked what he would do if he saw a man cheating at cards.

"Bet on him, of course," was his lordship's reply.

Lord de Ros' "system" was only available once in four deals—when he dealt! At such a crisis he would palm an ace and slip it on the bottom of the pack, besides which he had somehow marked all the other aces with his finger-nails, so that he could note, while dealing, to whom they fell. After the exposure of the fraud there was, at White's Club, a very vulgar "outsider" whom De Ros had snubbed on one or two occasions. He remarked to one of De Ros' friends, in a very insulting tone, that he felt sorry for De Ros.

and would certainly leave his card on him, but he was afraid that De Ros would mark it.

"I think you can safely take the risk," said his lordship's friend. "I am certain that he would not think your card a high enough honor."

This *bon mot* is usually attributed to Lord Alvanley.

Another one, almost as good, is also apropos of poor De Ros. One evening he won enough from Lord G. at a single sitting to build a small house in the country. Lord G., when the house was shown to him, was asked how he would like to live in it. "Not at all," was the reply. "I should not deem it safe. It is, after all, only a house of cards."

I must quote one more anecdote connected with cheating at bridge. There is, in a Chicago club, a very large game—usually fifty-cent stakes. At an afternoon session, Mr. T., who was playing third hand, took such a desperate, but successful, finesse, that his fourth-hand adversary uttered a little whistle of suspicion and surprise. T.'s partner offered to bet the whistling gentleman one hundred dollars that T. had a sound and sufficient reason for taking the finesse. The bet was taken, and Mr. T. was at once appealed to for his reasons.

"Why," he grumbled, "my dear man, I saw every card in your hand."

I hope that my readers will permit me to add to this rambling chapter of anecdotes a simple little story which has a rather moving touch of pathos in it.

Mr. R. is a professor at Harvard and a great reader and book worm. He passes most of his time in his library among his books and manuscripts. Mrs. R., on the contrary, is of the world, worldly, and usually on pleasure bent. Her pet amusement is her bridge-class, which meets twice a week at her house in Cambridge. When the twelve ladies get fairly "going," the clamor is simply deafening. Outside of an aviary, or an imperfect phonograph record, there is nothing in all the world to compare it to. I chanced to be calling on the professor

one wintry afternoon, and we had adjourned to his study to discuss the merits of Robert Louis Stevenson, Paul Verlaine, and two unique Hoyo de Monterey cigars.

We finally opened the study door, and were dumfounded by the roar and clatter that greeted us. Without saying a word, the professor stood in dumb dismay. He then went to a library shelf and took down a very rare copy of Cotton's "Compleat Gamester," and turned to a passage which he signaled me to read.

"The game of whist," I read from the learned Cotton, "is so called from the silence that is to be observed in the play." The opinion that "whist" means "silence" has the support of the best English etymologists.

There we stood, facing the verbal thunder and the vocal artillery, and there, in my hand, was poor, deluded Cotton's forgotten masterpiece.

I was finally taken in and presented to some of the ladies, and it was then that I witnessed what I consider the most remarkable thing that I have ever seen at bridge.

One of the ladies had made it hearts, with six hearts to the ace, king. Five tricks had been played, including two rounds of trumps. Three of the five tricks had been taken by the adversaries, and two of them—the ace and king of hearts—had been taken by the dealer. These two tricks in hearts, to which everybody had followed, had exhausted all the hearts except four small ones in the dealer's hand and the single nine-spot in dummy. At this point the dealer was called to the telephone, where she remained for two or three minutes, leaving her hand, with its remaining eight cards, on the table. During her absence the three ladies at the table commenced a heated argument about the Incroyable hats of the period.

When the dealer returned from her chat over the wire with her governess, she was evidently a little flustered. After some rambling remarks about the question of governesses and children in general, she carelessly picked up the two heart-tricks in front of her, instead

of the eight cards that properly made up her hand. She glanced at them agitatedly, and then exposed them to the other ladies at the table, with the remark:

"Oh, well, there's no earthly use in playing this hand out. I have nothing but trumps."

The ladies first satisfied themselves that her statement was true, and then sorrowfully threw their cards on the table, with a groan about their persistent ill luck, and the game then proceeded in the usual "confusion of languages."

Such of my readers as like to puzzle over little bridge problems may find some amusement in the following hand, invented by a Frenchman and usually called *le grand coup de Vienne*. The cards are arranged as follows: Clubs are trumps. North has the lead. North and South must make all the tricks against any defense. All the cards are exposed.

North—Clubs: ace, king, queen, 3. Diamonds: ace, queen, 6, 5, 4, 3. Spades: ace, queen. Hearts: 4.

South—Clubs: 5, 4, 2. Diamonds: 8, 7. Spades: jack, 10, 9. Hearts: ace, king, queen, jack, 3.

East—Clubs: 8, 7, 6. Diamonds: jack, 10, 9. Spades: king, 2. Hearts: 9, 8, 7, 6, 5.

West—Clubs: jack, ten, 9. Diamonds: king, 2. Spades: 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3. Hearts: 10, 2.

The solution of the problem will be found at the end of this article.

Before closing, I must say that I have played bridge with a multitude of inconceivably bad players, but I have never yet met one of them that would take a handicap. How strange this is! In tennis, in pigeon-shooting, in bicycling, and in billiards, handicaps are very generally offered and taken. An offer of a handicap at golf or at any other game of the sort is not an insult, but directly you offer to give a man odds at bridge, he instantly and indignantly refuses.

The secret of the mystery is twofold. First: Every player in the world rather "fancies" his game. He thinks

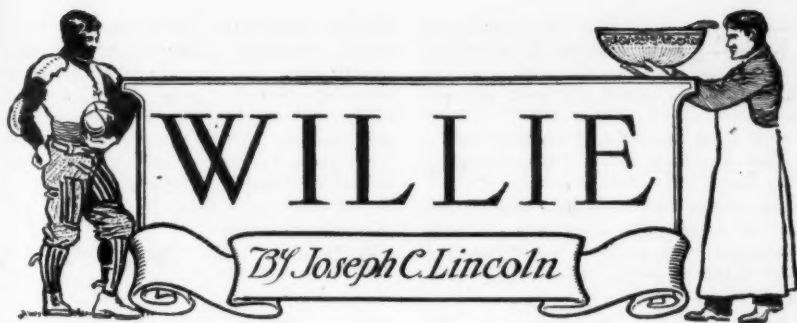
himself a far better player than he really is. Second: Games like billiards, court-tennis, etc., are purely games of physical deftness and skill, whereas bridge is largely a matter of intellect and reason. It is humiliating to acknowledge ourselves *mentally* inferior to another; but somehow it is not at all humiliating to admit the physical superiority of others.

No welter-weight would challenge Jack Johnson to fight twenty rounds in an open ring, but, at bridge, any bantam is ready to "take on" any heavy-weight at any time, in any club card-room, and on absolutely even terms.

This, perhaps, is the secret of the joy of bridge. We are all nearly perfect—in our own eyes. When we are told by others that our game is nothing but the worst sort of bumble-puppy, we cast upon them a pitying look, satisfied that they are poor, misguided imbeciles at best, too stupid to recognize genius when they see it.

NOTE—*Solution of the club-hand quoted in the body of this article.* North must lead four rounds of trumps. On the fourth round dummy should discard a diamond. If on this trick East discards a diamond, North can go over to South's hand, make four hearts, and come back through the king of diamonds, and gather in five diamonds, or the slam.

If, on trick four, East discards a spade, North must play out his ace and queen of spades, go over to South and make four hearts and a spade, and return to his queen, ace of diamonds—or thirteen tricks. But if East, at trick four, should discard a heart, North must at once play his ace of spades, and then go over to South's hearts. On one of these heart-tricks North must throw away his queen of spades. On the last lead of hearts—the fifth—East *must* either unguard his diamonds or throw away the king of spades. If he throws the king of spades, the jack becomes good in South's hand. If he unguards his diamonds, North's diamonds become good. In any event, North must make thirteen tricks.



T WAS late into August when Peter T. was took down with the inspiration. Not that there was anything 'specially new in his bein' took. He was subject to them seizures, Peter was, and every time they broke out in a fresh place. The Old Home House itself was one of his inspirations, so was the hirin' of college waiters, the openin' of the two "Annex" cottages, the South Shore Weather Bureau, and a whole lot more. Sometimes, as in the weather bureau foolishness, the disease left him and t'other two patients—meanin' me and Cap'n Jonadab—pretty weak in the courage, and wasted in the pocketbook; but gen'rally they turned out good, and our systems and bank-accounts was more healthy than normal. One of Peter T.'s inspirations was consider'ble like typhoid fever—if you did get over it, you felt better for havin' had it.

This time the attack was in the shape of a "supplementary season." 'Twas Peter's idea that shuttin' up the Old Home the fust week in September was altogether too soon.

"What's the use of quittin'," says he, "while there's bait left and the fish are bitin'? Why not keep her goin' through September and October? Two or three ads—my ads—in the papers, hintin' that the ducks and wild geese are beginnin' to keep the boarders awake by roostin' in the back yard

and hollerin' at night—two or three of them, and we'll have gunners here by the regiment. Other summer hotels do it, the Wapatomac House and the rest, so why not us? It hurts my conscience to see good money gettin' past the door 'count of the 'Not at Home' sign hung on the knob. What d'you say, partners?" says he.

Well, we had consider'ble to say, partic'lar Cap'n Jonadab. 'Twas too risky and too expensive. Gunnin' was all right except for one thing—that is, that there wa'n't none wuth mentionin'.

"Ducks are scurser round here than Democrats in a Vermont town-meetin'," growled the cap'n. "And as for geese! How long has it been since you see a goose, Barzilla?"

"Land knows!" says I. "I can remember as fur back as the fust time Washy Sparrow left off workin', but I can't—"

Brown told us to shut up. Did we cal'late he didn't know what he was talkin' about?

"I can see two geese right now," he snaps; "but they're so old and leather-headed you couldn't shoot an idea into their brains with a cannon. Gunnin' ain't the whole thing. My makin' a noise like a duck is only to get the would-be Teddy Roosevelts headed for this neck of the woods. After they get here, it's up to us to keep 'em. And I can think of as many ways to do that as the cap'n can of savin' a quarter. Our baseball team's been a success;

ain't it? Sure thing! Then why not a football team? Parker says he'll get it together, and coach and cap'n it, too. And Robinson and his daughter have agreed to stay till October fifteenth. "So there's a start, anyhow."

'Twas a start, and a pretty good one. The Robinsons had come to the Old Home about the fust of August, and they was our star boarders. "G. W. Robinson" was the old man's name as entered on the hotel log, and his daughter answered to the hail of "Grace"—that is, when she took a notion to answer at all. The Robinsons was what Peter T. called "exclusive." They didn't mix much with the rest of the bunch, but kept to themselves in their rooms, partic'lar when a fresh net-full of boarders was hauled aboard. Then they seemed to take an observation of every arrival afore they mingled; questioned the pedigree and statistics of all hands, and acted mighty suspicious.

The only thing that really stirred Papa Robinson up and got him excited and friendly was baseball and boat-racin'. He was an old sport, that was plain, the only real plain thing about him; the rest was mystery. As for Grace, she wa'n't plain by a good sight, bein' what Brown called a "peach." She could have had every single male in tow if she'd wanted 'em. Apparently she didn't want 'em, preferrin' to be lonesome and sad and interestin'.

Yes, sir, there was a mystery about them Robinsons, and even Peter T. give in to that.

"If 'twas anybody else," says he, "I'd say the old man was a crook, down here hidin' from the police. But he's too rich for that, and a'ways has been. He ain't any fly-by-night. I can tell the real article without lookin' for the 'sterlin'' mark on the handle. But I'll bet all the cold-storage eggs in the home against the henyard—and that's big odds—that he wa'n't christened Robinson. And his face is familiar to me. I've seen it somewhere, either in print or in person. I wish I knew where."

So if the Robinsons had agreed to

stay—they and their two servants—that was a big help, as Brown said. And Parker would help, too, though we agreed there wa'n't no mystery about him. He was a big, broad-shouldered young feller just out of a college somewhere, who had drifted our way the fortnit after the Robinsons came, with a reputation for athletics and a leanin' toward cigarettes and Miss Grace. She leaned a little, too, but hers wa'n't so much of a bend as his was. He was dead gone on her, and if she'd have decided to stay under water, he'd have ducked likewise. 'Twas easy enough to see why he believed in a "supplementary season."

Me and Jonadab argued it out with Peter, and finally we met half-way, so's to speak. We wouldn't keep the whole shebang open, but we'd shut up everything but one Annex cottage, and advertise that as a Gunner's Retreat. So we done it.

And it worked. Heavens to Betsy—yes! It worked so well, that by the second week in September we had to open t'other Annex. The gunnin' was bad, but Peter's ads fetched the would-be's, and his "excursions" and picnics and the football team held 'em. The football team especial. Parker capt'ned that, and, from the gunnin' crew and the waiters and some fishermen in the village, he dug up an eleven that showed symptoms of playin' the game. We played the Trumet High School, and beat it, thanks to Parker, and that tickled Pa Robinson so that he bought a two-handled, silver soup-tureen—"lovin' cup," he called it—and agreed to give it to the team roundabout that won the most of a series. So the series was arranged, the Old Home House crowd and the Wapatomac House eleven and three high-school gangs bein' in it. And 'twas practise, practise, practise, from then on.

When we opened the second Annex, the question of help got serious. Most of our college waiters had gone back to school, and we was pretty shy of servants. So we put some extry advertisin' in the Cape weeklies, and trusted in Providence.

The evenin' followin' the ad in the weeklies, I was settin' smokin' on the back piazza of the shut-up main hotel, when I heard the gate click and somebody crunchin' along the clam-shell path. I sung out: "Ahoy, there!" and the cruncher, whoever he was, come my way. Then I made out that he was a tall young chap, with his hands in his pockets.

"Good evenin'," says he. "Is this Mr. Brown?"

"Thankin' you for the compliment, it ain't," I says. "My name's Wingate."

"Oh!" says he. "Is that so? I've heard father speak of you, Mr. Wingate. He is Solomon Bearse — of West Ostable. I think you know him slightly."

Know him? Everybody on the Cape knows Sol Bearse; by reputation, anyhow. He's the richest, meanest old cranberry-grower and coastin'-fleet owner in these parts.

"Is Sol Bearse your dad?" I asks, astonished. "Why, then, you must be Gus?"

"No," he says. "I'm the other one—Fred."

"Oh, the college one. The one who's goin' to be a lawyer."

"Well, yes—and no," says he. "I *was* the college one, as you call it, but I'm not goin' to be a lawyer. Father and I have had some talk on that subject, and I think we've settled it. I—well, just at present, I'm not sure what I'm goin' to be. That's what I've come to you for. I saw your ad in the *Item*, and—I want a job."

I was set all aback, and left with my canvas floppin', as you might say. Sol Bearse's boy huntin' a job in a hotel kitchen! Soon's I could fetch a whole breath, I wanted partic'lars. He give 'em to me.

Seems he'd been sent out to one of the colleges in the Middle West by his dad, who was dead set on havin' a lawyer in the family. But the more he studied the less he hankered for law. What he wanted to be was a literature—a book-agent or a poet, or some such

foolishness. Old Sol, havin' no more use for a poet than he had for a poor relation, was red hot in a minute. Was this what he'd been droppin' good money in the education collection-box for? Was this—etcetery and so on. He'd be—what the church folks say he will be—if Fred don't go in for law. Fred he comes back that he'll be the same if he does. So they disowned each other by mutual consent, as the Irishman said, and the boy marches out of the front door, bag and baggage. And, as the poetry market seemed to be sort of overly supplied at the present time, he decided he must do somethin' to earn a dollar, and, seein' our ad, he comes to Wellmouth Port and the Old Home.

"But look here," says I, "we ain't got no job for a literary. We need fellers to pass pie and wash dishes. And *that* ain't no poem."

Well, he thought perhaps he could help make up advertisin'.

"You can't," I told him. "One time, when Peter T. Brown was away, me and Cap'n Jonadab cal'lated that a poetry advertisement would be a good idee and we managed to shake out ten lines or so. It begun:

"When you're feelin' tired and pale
To the Old Home House you ought to come
without fail.

We thought 'twas pretty slick, but we never got but one answer, and that was a circular from one of them correspondence schools of authors, sayin' they'd let us in on a course at cut rates. And the next thing we knew we see that poem in the joke-page of a Boston paper. I never——"

He laughed, quiet and sorrowful. He had the quietest way of speakin', anyhow, and his voice was a lovely tenor. To hear it purrin' out of his big, tall body was as unexpected as a hymn tune in a cent-in-the-slot talkin'-machine.

"Too bad," he says. "As a waiter, I'm afraid——"

Just then the door of one of the Annex houses opened sudden, and there stood Grace Robinson. The light behind her showed her up plain as could

be. I heard Fred Bearse make a kind of gaspin' noise in his throat.

"What a lovely night!" she says, half to herself. Then she calls: "Papa, dear, you really ought to see the stars."

Old man Robinson, who I judged was in the settin'-room, snarled out somethin' which wa'n't no compliment to the stars. Then he ordered her to come in afore she caught cold. She sighed and obeyed orders, shuttin' the door astern of her. Next thing I knew that literary tenor grabbed my arm—'twa'n't no canary-bird grip, neither.

"Who was that?" he whispers, eager.

I told him. "That's the name they give," says I, "but we have doubts about it's bein' the real one. You see, there's some mystery about them Robinsons, and——"

"I'll take that waiter's place," he says, quick. "Shall I go right in and begin now? Don't stop to argue, man; I say I'll take it."

And he did take it, by main strength, pretty nigh. Every time I'd open my mouth he'd shut it up, and at last I give in, and showed him where he could sleep.

"You turn out at five sharp," I told him. "And you needn't bother to write no poems while you're dressin', neither."

"Good night," he answers, brisk. "Go, will you, please? I want to think."

I went. 'Tain't until an hour later that I remembered he hadn't asked one word concernin' the wages. And next mornin' he comes to me and suggests that perhaps 'twould be as well if I didn't tell his real name. He was pretty sure he'd been away schoolin' so long that he wouldn't be recognized. "And incognitos seem to be fashionable here," he purrs, soft and gentle.

I wouldn't know an incognito if I stepped on one, but the tenor voice of him kind of made me sick.

"All right," I snaps, sarcastic. "Suppose I call you 'Willie.' How'll that do?"

"Do as well as anything, I guess," he says. Didn't make no odds to him.

If I'd have called him "Maud," he'd have been satisfied.

He waited in Annex Number Two, which was skippered by Cap'n Jonadab. And, for a poet, he done pretty well, so the cap'n said.

"But say, Barzilla," asks Jonadab, "does that Willie thing know the Robinsons?"

"Guess not," I says. But thinkin' of the way he'd acted when the girl come to the door: "Why?"

"Oh, nothin' much. Only when he come in with the doughnuts the fust mornin' at breakfast, I thought Grace sort of jumped and looked funny. Anyhow, she didn't eat nothin' after that. P'raps that was on account of her bein' out sailin' the day afore, though."

I said I cal'lated that was it, but all the same I was interested. And when, a day or so later, I see Grace and Willie talkin' together earnest, out back of the kitchen, I was more so. But I never said nothin'. I've been seafarin' long enough to know when to keep my main hatch closed.

The supplementary season dragged along, but it wa'n't quite the success it looked like at the start. The gunnin' that year was even worse than usual, and excursions and picnics in late September ain't all joy, by no manner of means. We shut up the second Annex at the end of the month, and transferred the help to Number One. Precious few new boarders come, and a good many of the old ones quit. Them that did stay stayed on account of the football. We was edgin' up toward the end of the series, and our team and the Wapatomac crowd was neck and neck. It looked as if the final game between them and us, over on their grounds, would settle who'd have the soup-tureen.

Pa Robinson and Parker had been quite interested in Willie when he fust come. They thought he might play with the eleven, you see. But he wouldn't. Set his foot right down.

"I don't care for athletics," he says, mild but firm. "They used to interest me somewhat, but not now."

The old man was crazy. He'd heard about Willie's literature leanin's, and he give out that he'd never see a writer yet that wa'n't a "sissy." Wanted us to fire Bearse right off, but we kept him, thanks to me. If he'd seen the "sissy" kick the ball once, same as I did, it might have changed his mind some. He was passin' along the end of the field when the gang was practisin', and the ball come his way. He caught it on the fly, and sent it back with his toe. It went a mile, seemed so, whirlin' and whizzin'. Willie never even looked to see where it went; just kept on his course for the kitchen.

The big sensation hit us on the fifth of October, right after supper. Me and Peter T. and Jonadab was in the office, when 'down comes Henry, old Robinson's man-servant, white as a sheet and wringin' his hands distracted.

"Oh, I say, Mr. Brown!" says he, shakin' all over like a quicksand. "Oh, Mr. Brown, sir! Will you come right up to Mr. Sterz—I mean Mr. Robinson's room, please, sir! 'E wants to see you gentlemen special. 'Urry, please! 'Urry!"

So we "urried," wonderin' what on earth was the matter. And when we got to the Robinson rooms, there was Grace, lookin' awful pale, and the old man himself ragin' up and down like a horse mack'rel in a fish-weir.

Soon as papa see us, he jumped up in the air, so's to speak, and when he lit 'twas right on our necks. His daughter, who seemed to be the sanest one in the lot, run and shut the door.

"Look here, you!" raved the old gent, shakin' both fists under Peter T.'s nose. "Didn't you tell me this was a respectable hotel? And ain't we payin' for respectability?"

Peter admitted it, bein' too much set back to argue, I cal'late.

"Yes!" rages Robinson. "We pay enough for all the respectability in this State. And yet, by the livin' Moses! I can't go out of my room to spoil my digestion with your cussed dried-apple pie, but what I'm robbed!"

"Robbed!" the three of us gurgles in chorus.

"Yes, sir! Robbed! Robbed! Robbed! What do you think I came here for? And why do I stay here all this time? 'Cause I like it? 'Cause I can't afford a better place? No, sir! By the great horn spoon! I come here because I thought in this forsaken hole I could get lost and be safe. And now——"

He tore around like a water-sprout, Grace tryin' to calm him, and Henry and Suzette, the maid, groanin' and sobbin' accompaniments in the corner. I looked at the dresser. There was silver-backed brushes and all sorts of expensive doodads spread out loose, and Miss Robinson's watch and a di'mond ring, and a few other knickknacks. I couldn't imagine a thief's leavin' all that truck, and I said so.

"Them?" sputters pa, frantic. "What the brimstone blazes do you think I care for them? I could buy that sort of stuff by the car-load, if I wanted to. But what's been stole is—— Oh, get out and leave me alone! You're no good, the lot of you!"

"Father has had a valuable paper stolen from him," explains Grace. "A very valuable paper."

"Valuable!" howls her dad. "*Valuable!* Why, if Gordon and his gang get that paper, they've got *me*, that's all. Their suit's as good as won, and I know it. And to think that I've kept it safe up to within a month of the trial, and now—— Grace Sterzer, you stop pattin' my head. I'm no pussy-cat! By the——" And so on, indefinite.

When he called his daughter Sterzer, instead of Robinson, I cal'lated he was loony, sure enough. But Peter T. slapped his leg.

"Oh!" he says, as if he'd seen a light all to once. "Ah, *now* I begin to get wise. I knew your face was—— See here, Mr. Sterzer—Mr. Gabriel Sterzer—don't you think we'd better have a real, plain talk on this matter? Let's get down to tacks. Was the paper you lost something to do with the Sterzer-Gordon lawsuit? The Aluminium Trust care you know?"

The old man stopped dancin', stared

at him hard, and then set down and wiped his forehead.

"Somethin' to do with it?" he groans. "Why, you idiot, it was *it*! If Gordon's lawyers get that paper—and they've been after it for a year—then the fat's all in the fire. There's nothin' left for me to do but compromise."

When Peter T. mentioned the name of Gabriel Sterzer me and Jonadab begun to see a light, too. 'Course you remember the bust-up of the Aluminium Trust—everybody does. The papers was full of it. There'd been a row among the two leadin' stockholders, Gabe Sterzer and "Major" Gordon. Them two double-back-action millionaires practically owned the trust, and the State 'twas in, and the politics of that State, and all the politicians. Each of 'em run three or four banks of their own, and a couple of newspapers, and other things, till you couldn't rest. Then they had the row, and Gabe had took his playthings and gone home, as you might say. Among the playthings was a majority of the stock, and the major had sued for it. The suit, with pictures of the leadin' characters and the lawyers and all, had been spread-eagled in the papers everywhere. No wonder "Robinson's" face was familiar.

But it seemed that Sterzer had held the trump-card in the shape of the original agreement between him and Gordon. And he hung on to it like the Old Scratch to a fiddler. Gordon and his crowd had done everything, short of murder, to get it; hired folks to steal it, and so on, because, once they *did* get it, Gabe hadn't a leg to stand on—he'd have to divide equal, which wa'n't his desires, by a good sight. The Sterzer lawyers had wanted him to leave it in their charge, but no—he knew too much for that. The pig-headed old fool had carted it with him wherever he went, and him and his daughter had come to the Old Home House because he figgered nobody would think of their *bein'* in such an out-of-the-way place as that. But they *had* thought of it. Anyhow, the paper was gone.

"But Mr. Robinzer—Sterson, I mean—" cut in Cap'n Jonadab, "you could have 'em took up for stealin', couldn't you? They wouldn't dare—"

"'Course they'd dare! S'pose they don't know I wouldn't have that agreement get in the papers? Dare! They'd dare anything. If they get away with it, by hook or crook, all I can do is haul in my horns and compromise. If they've got that paper, the suit never comes to trial."

"Well, they ain't got it yet," says Peter, decided. "Whoever stole the thing is right here in this boardin'-house, and it's up to us to see that they stay here. Barzilla, you take care of the mail. No letters must go out to-night. Jonadab, you set up and watch all hands, help and all. Nobody must leave this place, if we have to tie 'em. And I'll keep a gen'ral overseein' of the whole thing, till we get a detective. And—if you'll stand the way-bill, Mr. Sterzer—we'll have the best Pinkerton in Boston down here in three hours by special train. By the way, are you sure the thing is lifted? Where was it?"

Old Gabe kind of colored up, and give in that 'twas under his pillow. He always kept it there after the beds was made.

"Humph!" grunts Brown. "Why didn't you hang it on the door-knob? Under the pillow! If I was a sneak-thief, the first place I'd look would be under the pillow; after that I'd tackle the jewelry-box and the safe."

There was consider'ble more talk. Seems the Sterzers had left Henry on guard, same as they always done, when they went to supper. They could trust him and Suzette absolute, they said. But Henry had gone down the hall after a drink of water, and when he got back everything apparently was all right. 'Twa'n't till Gabe himself come up that he found the paper gone. I judged he'd made it interestin' for Henry; the poor critter looked that way.

All hands agreed to keep mum for the present and to watch. Peter hustled to the office and called up the Pinkertons over the long distance. They said

the special, with the detective aboard, should start immediate.

"Now, fellers," says Brown to me and Jonadab, "we know what we've got to do. Nothin'll be too good for this shebang and us if we get that agreement back. Fust place, the thing was done a few minutes after the supper-bell rung. That is, unless that 'Enry is in on the deal, which ain't unlikely, considerin' the price he could get from the Gordon gang. Was anybody late at the tables?"

Why, yes; there was quite a few late. Two of the "gunners," who'd been on a forlorn-hope duck-hunt; and a minister and his wife, out walkin' for their health; and Parker and two fellers from the football team, who'd been practisin'.

"Any of the waiters or the chambermaids?" asks Peter.

I'd been expectin' he'd ask that, and I hated to answer.

"One of the waiters was a little late," says I. "Willie wa'n't on hand immediate. Said he went to wash his hands."

Now the help gen'rally washed in the fo'castle—the servant's quarters, I mean—but there was a wash-room on the floor where the Sterzer-Robinsons roomed. Peter looked at Jonadab, and the two of 'em at me. And I had to own up that Willie had come downstairs from that wash-room a few minutes after the bell rung.

"Hum!" says Peter T. "Hum!" he says. "Look here, Barzilla, didn't you tell me you knew that feller's real name, and that he had been studyin' law."

"No," says I, emphatic. "I said 'twas law he was tryin' to get away from. His tastes run large to literation and poetry."

"Hum!" says Peter again. "All papers are more or less literary—even trust agreements. Hum!"

"All the same," says I, "I'll bet my Sunday beaver that he never took it."

They didn't answer, but looked solemn. Then the three of us went on watch.

Nobody made a move to go out that evenin'. I kept whatever mail was handed in, but there was nothin' that looked like any agreements, and nothin' addressed to Gordon or his lawyers. At twelve or so, the detective come. Peter drove up to the depot to meet the special. He told the whole yarn on the way down.

The detective was a nice enough chap, and we agreed he should be "Mr. Snow," of New York, gunnin' for health and ducks. He said the watch must be kept up all night, and in the mornin' he'd make his fust move. So said, so done.

And afore breakfast that next mornin' we called everybody into the dinin'-room, boarders, help, stable hands, every last one. And Peter made a little speech. He said that a very valuable paper had been taken out of Mr. Robinson's room, and 'twas plain that it must be on the premises somewhere. 'Course, nobody was suspicious, but, speakin' for himself, he'd feel better if his clothes and his room was searched through. How'd the rest feel about it?

Well, they felt diff'rent ways, but Parker spoke up like a brick, and said he wouldn't rest easy till his belongin's was pawed over, and then the rest fell in line. We went through everybody and every room on the place. Found nothin', of course. Snow—the detective—said he didn't expect to. But I tell you there was some talkin' goin' on, just the same. The minister he hinted that he had some doubts about them dissipated gunners; and the gunners cal'lated they never see a parson yet wouldn't bear watchin'. As for me, I felt like a pickpocket, and, judgin' from Jonadab's face, he felt the same.

The detective man swooped around quiet, bobbin' up in unexpected places, like a porpoise, and askin' questions once in a while. He asked about most everybody, but about Willie, especial. I judged Peter T. had dropped a hint to him and to Gabe. Anyhow, the old critter give out that he wouldn't trust a poet with the silver handles on his grandmarm's coffin. As for Grace, she acted dreadful nervous and worried.

Once I caught her swabbin' her eyes, as if she'd been cryin'; but I'd never seen her and Willie together but the one time I told you of.

Four days and nights crawled by. No symptoms yet. The Pinkertons was watchin' the Gordon lawyers' office in New York, and they reported that nothin' like that agreement had reached there. And our own man—Snow—said he'd go bail it hadn't been smuggled off the premises sence he struck port. So 'twas safe so far; but where was it, and who had it?

The final football game, the one with Wapatomac, was to be played over on their grounds on the afternoon of the fifth day. Parker, cap'n of the eleven, give out that, considerin' everything, he didn't know but we'd better call it off. Old Robinson—Sterzer, of course—wouldn't hear of it.

"Not much," says he. "I wouldn't chance your losin' that game for forty papers. You sail in and lick 'em!" or words to that effect.

So the eleven was to cruise across the bay in the *Greased Lightnin'*, Peter's little motor-launch, and the rooters was to go by train later on. 'Twas Parker's idee, goin' in the launch. 'Twould be more quiet, less strain on the nerves of his men, and they could talk over plays and signals on the v'y-age.

So at nine o'clock in the forenoon they was ready, the whole team—three waiters, two fishermen, one carpenter from up to Wellmouth Center, a stable hand, and Parker and three reg'lar boarders. These last three was friends of Parker's that he'd had come down some time afore. He knew they could play football, he said, and they'd come to oblige him.

The eleven gathered on the front porch, all in togs and sweaters, principally provided and paid for by Sterzer. Cap'n Parker had the ball under his arm, and the launch was waitin' ready at the landin'. All the boarders—except Grace, who was up-stairs in her room—and most of the help was standin' round to say good luck and good-by.

Snow, the detective, was there, and I whispered in his ear.

"Say," I says, "do you realize that for the fust time since the robbery here's a lot of folks leavin' the house? How do you know but what——"

He winked and nodded brisk. "I'll attend to that," he says.

But he didn't have to. Parker spoke fust, and took the wind out of his sails.

"Gentlemen," says he, "I don't know how the rest of you feel, but, as for me, I don't start without clear skirts. I suggest that Mr. Brown and Mr. Wingate here search each one of us thoroughly. Who knows," says he, laughin', "but what I've got that precious stolen paper tucked inside my sweater? Ha! ha! Come on, fellers! I'll be first."

He tossed the ball into a chair and marched into the office, the rest of the players after him, takin' it as a big joke. And there the searchin' was done, and done thorough, 'cause Peter asked Mr. Snow to help, and he knew how. One thing was sure; Pa Gabe's agreement wa'n't hid about the persons of that football team. Everybody laughed—that is, all but the old man and the detective. Seemed to me that Snow was kind of disappointed, and I couldn't see why. 'Twa'n't likely any of *them* was thieves.

Cap'n Parker picked up his football and started off for the launch. He'd got about ha'f-way to the shore when Willie—who'd been standin' with the rest of the help, lookin' on—stepped for'ard pretty brisk and whispered in the ear of the Pinkerton man. The detective jumped, sort of, and looked surprised and mighty interested.

"By George!" says he. "I never thought of that." Then he run to the edge of the piazza and called.

"Mr. Parker!" he sings out. "Oh, Mr. Parker!"

Parker was at the top of the little rise that slopes away down to the landin'. The rest of the eleven was scattered from the shore to the hotel steps. He turns, without stoppin', and answers.

"What is it?" he sings out, kind of impatient.

"There's just one thing we forgot to look at," shouts Snow. "Merely a matter of form, but just bring that—Hey! Stop him! Stop him!"

For Parker, instead of comin' back, had turned and was leggin' it for the launch as fast as he could gallop, and that was some.

"Stop!" roars the Pinkerton man, jumpin' down the steps. "Stop, or—"

"Hold him, Jim!" screeched Parker, over his shoulder. One of the biggest men on the eleven—one of the three "friends" who'd been so obligin' as to come down on purpose to play football—made a dive, caught the detective around the waist, and threw him flat.

"Go on, Ed!" he shouts. "I've got him, all right."

Ed—meanin' Parker—was goin' on, and goin' fast. All hands seemed to be frozen stiff, me and Jonadab and Peter T. included. As for me, I couldn't make head nor tail of the doin's; things was comin' too quick for my understandin'.

But there was one on that piazza who wa'n't froze. Fur from it! Willie, the poet-waiter, made a jump, swung his long legs over the porch-rail, hit the ground, and took after that Parker man like a cat after a field-mouse.

Run! I never see such runnin'! He fairly flashed across that lawn and over the rise. Parker was almost to the landin'; two more jumps and he'd been aboard the launch. If he'd once got aboard, a turn of the switch and that electric craft would have had him out of danger in a shake. But them two jumps was two too many. Willie riz off the ground like a flyin'-machine, turned his feet up and his head down, and lapped his arms around Parker's knees. Down the pair of 'em went "Ker-wallop!" and the football flew out of Parker's arms.

In an eye-wink that poet was up, grabs the ball, and comes tearin' back toward us.

"Stop him!" shrieks Parker from astern.

"Head him off! Tackle him!" bellers the big chap who was hangin' onto the detective.

They tell me that discipline and obeyin' orders is as much in football as 'tis aboard ship. If that's so, every one of the Old Home House eleven was onto their jobs. There was five men between Willie and the hotel, and they all bore down on him like bats on a June bug.

"Get him!" howls Parker, racin' to help.

"Down him!" chimes in big Jim, his knee in poor Snow's back.

"Run, Bearse! Run!" whoops the Pinkerton man, liftin' his mouth out of the sand.

He run—don't you worry about that! Likewise he dodged. One chap swooped at him, and he ducked under his arms. Another made a dive, and he jumped over him. The third one he pushed one side with his hand. "Pushed!" did I say? "Knocked" would be better, for the feller—the carpenter 'twas—went over and over like a barrel rollin' down-hill. But there was two more left, and one of 'em was bound to have him.

Then a window up-stairs banged open.

"Oh, Mr. Bearse!" screamed a voice—Grace Sterzer's voice. "Don't let them get you!"

We all heard her, in spite of the shoutin' and racket. Willie heard her, too. The two fellers, one at each side, was almost on him, when he stopped, looked up, jumped back, and, as cool as a rain-barrel in January, he dropped that ball and kicked it.

I can see that picture now, like a tableau at a church sociable. The fellers that was runnin', the others on the ground, and that literary pie-passer with his foot swung up to his chin.

And the ball! It sailed up and up in a long curve, begun to drop, passed over the piazza roof, and out of sight.

"Lock your door, Miss Sterzer," sung out Fred Bearse—"Willie" for short. "Lock your door and keep that ball. I think your father's paper is inside it."

As sure as my name is Barzilla Wingate, he had kicked that football straight through the open window into old Gabe's room.

There! The cat's out of the bag, and there ain't much more to tell. Everybody made a bolt for the room, old Gabe and Peter T. in the lead. Grace let her dad in, and the ball was ripped open in a hurry. Sure enough! Inside, between the leather and the rubber, was the missin' agreement. Among the jubulations and praise services nobody thought of much else until Snow, the Pinkerton man, come upstairs, his clothes tore and his eyes and nose full of sand.

"Humph!" says he. "You've got it, hey? Good! Well, you haven't got friend Parker. Look!"

Such of us as could looked out of the window. There was the launch, with Parker and his three "friends" in it, headin' two-forty for blue water.

"Let 'em go," says old Gabe, contented. "I wouldn't arrest 'em if I could. This is no police-station job."

It come out afterward that Parker was a young chap just from law-school, who had gone to work for the firm of shysters who was attendin' to the Gordon interests. They had tracked Sterzer to the Old Home House, and had put their new hand on the job of gettin' that agreement. Fust he'd tried to shine up to Grace, but the shine—her part of it—had wore off. Then he decided to steal it; and he done it, just how nobody knows. Snow, the detective, says he cal'lates Henry, the servant, is wiser'n most folks think, fur's that's concerned.

Snow had found out about Parker inside of two days. Soon's he got the report as to who he was, he was moral-ly sartin that he was the thief. He'd

looked up Willie's record, too, and that was clear. In fact, Willie helped him consider'ble. 'Twas him that recognized Parker, havin' seen him play on a law-school team. Also 'twas Willie who thought of the paper bein' in the football.

Land of love! What a hero they made of that waiter!

"By the living Moses!" bubbles old Gabe, shakin' both the boy's hands. "That was the finest run and tackle and the finest kick I ever saw anywhere. I've seen every big game for ten years, and I never saw anything half so good."

The Pinkerton man laughed. "There's only one chap on earth who can kick like that. Here he is," layin' his hand on "Willie's" shoulder. "Bearse, the All-American half-back last year."

Gabe's mouth fell open. "Not 'Bung' Bearse, of Yarvard!" he sings out. "Why! *Why!*"

"Of course, father!" purrs his daughter, smilin' and happy. "I knew him at once. He and I were—er—slightly acquainted when I was at Highcliffe."

"But—but 'Bung' Bearse!" gasps the old gent. "Why, you rascal! I saw you kick the goal that beat Haleton. Your reputation is world-wide."

Willie—Fred Bearse, that is—shook his head, sad and regretful.

"Thank you, Mr. Sterzer," says he, in his gentle tenor. "I have no desire to be famous in athletics. My aspirations now are entirely literary."

Well, he's got his literary job at last, bein' engaged as sportin' editor on one of Gabe's papers. His dad, old Sol Bearse, seems to be pretty well satisfied, partic'lar as another engagement between the Bearse family and the Sterzers has just been give out.

The EMPEROR



By Austin Adams



HE rolled over on his back and looked up at the stars. She started, crept to the edge of the little platform, and peered down into the yawning abyss. His sudden move and the realization that night had fallen roused her once more to a sickening sense of her impossible situation. For one dizzy instant she felt like flinging herself headlong. Instead, she laughed aloud.

Undoing her hair, she let it wave wildly in the wind. She threw out her arms and breathed in deep the quickly reviving feeling of confidence—in him, in life, in the great Mother on whose bare brown breast she had lain always unafraid. Presently, far down among the giant timber at the base of the peak, she heard Lon Dabney's nasal voice drawling:

"The years roll swiftly by, Lorena."

The faithful old watch-dog must have sniffed danger afar, and followed her by instinct. And now her laugh was pleasanter to hear. But Gordon sighed.

"Sighing for new worlds to conquer, Alexander?" asked the girl, quite herself by this, and venturing to come close to where he sprawled, grouchy and grim.

"No. My pipe won't draw," grumbled Gordon.

"Won't it—*really?*" That haunting, sympathetic voice of hers could hurt like a rasp when she chose to be sarcastic. And she usually chose to be

sarcastic with him. "How perfectly disheartening! But, then, a brave man looks upon such obstacles as opportunities to prove his mettle. How's your ankle now?"

"Pains like the Old Harry," replied Gordon, getting up on his elbow. "Heard you laughing just now. That's the spirit! Deucedly awkward, I know, to have to spend the night up here in this romantic way, but there's no use in crying over spilled milk—no, nor over spilled reputations, either. And now, Brook, do, like a good fellow, drop your blooming sermonizing. Isn't one night among the stars worth an eternity of—well, respectability?"

"But you had no right to—to—to— Oh, it was unkind of you, unmanly, unchivalrous——"

"To sprain my ankle?" broke in Gordon, suspending the delicate operation of cleaning his pipe long enough to look up at her with an injured expression.

"It was mean; yes, selfish and unworthy of you, Alec, to persuade me to come up here with you alone."

"Just like a woman! As if you were not fairly aching to be persuaded! Why, good Lord, Brook, you confessed that you were just crazy to see the sunset from the peak!"

"The sunset—not to spend the night, you—you—you disappointment! They'll have been worried to death when I failed to show up. And goodness only knows what they may be thinking and saying this very minute!"

Gordon looked at her, puzzled. Her unmistakable inward composure, so re-

freshly unlike her previous agitation and frank suspicion, belied her words. He had not heard Lon Dabney's reassuring chant down in the cañon. So he set down the phenomenon as one more among his already numerous collection of woman's riddles without answers. Neither spoke for some seconds.

"Alec."

"Brook?"

"Alec," said Brook, so soulfully that he laid by the amber mouthpiece and stared at her. "Alec, if I were to pretend that all this"—and she gathered up within her outstretched arms the hundred-mile circle of mountain and cañon and dim, far sea—"if I tried to make out that I don't feel it all, thrill to it all, why, then——"

"I'd know you were lying to me—like your own sweet circumspect self? That's true; I would, Brook. But tonight we mean to stop lying to each other like intimate friends, and to treat one another with the heartfelt frankness of strangers? Shake!"

"I sometimes feel that we are strangers," she murmured wistfully, "or, rather, that I have never known you, the real you, Alec. But up here, above the world, with only the night and the vast around us and the stars above, why, somehow——"

"It's awfully chilly, don't you think?" he interrupted, beginning to fear that she didn't understand the rules and might spoil the game by playing out of her turn. "Confound sprained ankles! Would you mind trying to start a fire down there on the rocks? I'll manage to get down the ladder, somehow, after a bit."

Glad of the opportunity to pull herself together—she suddenly realized that she had perhaps been indiscreet—Brook scrambled down the crazy steps from the platform and plunged into the brush surrounding the open, broken, stony summit. There was no time to lose. Lon was coming. He would leave his horse in the little clearing on the shelf, two miles below, and strike the trail to the peak afoot. He must be half-way up already. It was perfect-

ly dear of him to come to look for her, but, now that she knew he was coming, she did hope and pray that he would not hurry.

When she returned to the peak with an armful of twigs and fagots, Gordon had already come down from the platform. He was seated leaning against a slab of granite. His pipe was once more in commission, and the pain in his ankle must have subsided, for he was whistling contentedly.

The fire was crackling in a moment. Now or never she must say to him what she had so long been yearning to say. But she must be prudent; she must adopt his own trick of indirectness and baffling impersonality in making her general observations. Once or twice she glanced at him furtively, and each time deepened her resolve to be extremely cautious—and each time postponed the attempt just one more minute. Gordon whistled on.

"When two people find themselves alone on the roof of the world," he began suddenly, and in a pensive mood quite new to him and consequently disconcerting and likely to melt her purpose not to be sentimental; "when a man and a woman, quite by accident, find themselves lifted above the necessity to be anything but what they really are, why, then, it does seem that they can afford to be whatever they would like to be, doesn't it?"

She made no reply for a full half-minute; then she said, replying rather to his mood than his words: "Alec, why are you wasting your time as you are?"

"Wasting my time?" he exclaimed. "On the great Cuyamaca ranch—twenty-two thousand acres fenced in—lake ten miles around and three mountains on the property—nine miles from the front gate to the house—the Pacific Ocean visible to the west and to the east the Salton Sea—the uplift of the everlasting hills for one's steady diet, and no neighbors nearer than the stars! A cowboy wasting his time, you say, *here?* Why, Gipsy, it's an empire!"

"In which you choose to play the clown!" Brook answered sadly, all her

anti-sentimental resolutions shriveled up by the unwonted warmth of his manner. "You—you, Alec Gordon, who could be an emperor! You're not even a man, as we measure men here, but just a selfish, dawdling fool, the laughing-stock of a lot of well-meaning but rough and ignorant fellows like the rest of the boys up here!"

"Jee-ru-sa-lem!" A thin curl of smoke followed his ejaculation of amusement.

"Who *are* you?" pleaded the girl, laying her hand on his sleeve and vainly trying to hide emotion which stirred her through and through. "Who are you, Mr. Gordon? I have the right to know, because you have made me—no, I don't mean that! Because I—because I——"

In the little tempest which choked her she had time to fortify herself against further weakness, and he to take refuge behind his wonted air of jocularity.

"I?" he laughed. "Who am I? Why, Alec, not a howling success as a cowboy—ask the Old Man; and a not half-bad philosopher on the side—ask your—own awakening little puzzle of a heart!"

"And what else?" she demanded eagerly. "What else? Alec—Mr. Gordon, you may think me only an ignorant little mountain girl born and raised on the wrong side of the Divide, but I——"

"How'd you guess that I was from New York?" he interrupted, his quizical humor, now as always, making her laugh, in spite of her determination to force him into seriousness.

"Oh, I knew from the very first that you were an Englishman or a New Yorker. You speak such abominable English—yes, and because—well, because you would cut such a puny, helpless figure if the big, true men in the world didn't *do things* for you!"

"Thanks awfully!" he chuckled, lifting his hat.

"But you could be—oh, everything great and useful!"

"Once more, thanks awfully! Go on, I like it."

"Did you ever have a lucid interval?"
"Once."

"Do have another now! Seriously, dear Alec, try to be the man you could be—for my sake! I would not have come up here alone with any other man on earth. Can't you see, then, that I trust you, that I refuse to accept your own false valuation, and that I long to have you be the man I have always felt you could be, if—— Oh, Alec," she went on boldly, suffering him to keep the hand he had taken into his, "there's some horrid, lying reason* for it all; won't you tell it me—*please*?"

He looked up at her doubtfully for a moment. Her big hazel eyes held his look steadily. A shade of something like wild hope crossed his face; crossed and vanished instantly. When he spoke, it was with the old jesting nonchalance.

"Ah, it's the sad, sweet story of my life that I am asked to tell? The dark secret of my past? Don't you know, Brook, that we chaps—you'll find the likes of me on every range and in every mining-camp this side of Denver—that we hike West because out here there are no yesterdays, but a man may wipe off the old slate, demand a fresh deck of cards, assume a new alias every six months, and no questions asked? No man's antecedents are ever shipped across the Rockies, but every man has to stand or fall on his own unindorsed boot-soles. And here you are wanting to know who my grandfather was, and if the police back East want me for anything! It's not playing the game."

"I don't care a pin who your grandfather was, nor about your past!" she retorted. "I'm not New York. I'm West—West, to the bottom of my soul. It's not about some wrong you may have done back East that I want to know, but why you go on, month after month—it's nearly six now—doing yourself and me—I mean all of us—the wrong of throwing yourself away. That's what I want to know. That's why I dared to come up here alone with you, so that you would trust me and tell me. Oh, can't you see?"

He understood—too clearly. Her

revelation frightened him a little. Her oval, olive face, framed in by her loose black hair and propped upon her knees as she crouched by the fire, was filled with the hungry look of hopeless love. Gordon watched it intently as the ruddy light of the fire fell upon it. Then he started as if about to fling his arms around her; but again the shadow flitted across his face and vanished as before, leaving only the expression of cynical unconcern.

"Preaching again," he complained, smiling. "They certainly made no mistake when they named you Brook. You do 'go on forever.' Phew!"

Alarming him by the swiftness and feeling with which she did so, she staggered to her feet and cried out: "Oh, Mr. Gordon, this is cruel, base, unbearable!"

He had known how to dry her tears when she had first realized, with immense embarrassment and fear, that his sprained ankle meant that they must spend the night together; but not so with those which now trickled slowly, one by one, down her brown cheeks. These tears, Gordon feared, came from unsuspected depths too sacred to trifle with; such as escape through the cracks of a freshly broken heart, these silent, creeping, solitary, condemning tears.

"Why, Gipsy," he said gently, tugging at the hem of her short khaki skirt, "you're not going to take my chaff to heart, are you, at this late day?"

She made no answer; so he kept on pulling at her skirt until she dropped upon her knees and held out her hands over the fire as if she were cold.

"Do you love me, little girl?" asked Gordon, speaking very low, and as though he were groping his way through a long, dark tangle of doubts and fears.

For answer she settled back upon her heels and bowed her head over her folded arms. Then quickly she lifted her face to him and said: "No. I love not you, but the man you might have been. But as long as I live I shall love only him! Just see what you have done

to me, Alec Gordon: filled my heart—and then emptied it!"

She stretched out her arms in a gesture of despair. Convulsed by a sudden surge of pity and a wild desire to put himself right in her eyes, Gordon snatched her two hands and drew her toward him.

"Good God! Brook," he muttered, "don't say that! It's been a stiff fight, but I'm going to win! To-night, as you and I watched the rose light die on the hills, and the world fell away from our lone two selves, I almost felt that I—but, then, what's the use?"

"What do you mean?" she cried, tightening her grasp on his hand and speaking fast. "If you mean that there is some dreadful lying reason for your hideous playing, tell me, tell me, Alec, so that I may defy it! Or if there is some big, hard, dreadful something to be done, tell me, so that we may dare it and do it together. This night must mean everything to us!"

"Stop! Stop!" he almost groaned, pushing her away from him and getting to his feet. "I'm not worth any good woman's all, least of all yours; but, then, I brought you up here to try to persuade you that I'm not the idle idiot that you think me. Why, Brook, what's the matter?"

He had walked up and down as he spoke, and on turning again to the fire he was horrified by the look on her face. Still on her knees, and swaying as if she were faint, Brook was watching him with rapidly increasing horror in her eyes.

"You're walking," she moaned. "Your ankle—you deceived me—you are not hurt—it's all a lie."

Dazed and sick, she remained bowed low over the fire, sobbing piteously and torn by an agony of doubt and shame. Suddenly she leaped to her feet, her eyes flashed, her breath came short and quick. And Gordon, who had been trying to make out the cause of it all, saw the black truth. She suspected him of nameless dishonor.

"Wait! Wait!" he cried, as he sprang to her side. "I did fool you about my ankle; but I swear to God,

Brook, that I did it only to have you to myself a little while. I couldn't talk to you down there. I knew what the night is like up here. And I wanted you to feel it, too—I was so hungry to hear you tell me that you loved me. Won't you believe me, Brook?"

But it was too late. He had puzzled her too long. Even as he pleaded with her, all her early doubt, now deep as hell and as black, rolled back upon her. But with the thought of his perfidy and her own danger came also to her the quickness and the spirit of her mountain nurture. Always in her lonely rides about the hills she carried a small revolver at her belt, and it gleamed now in the hand with which she waved him back.

"Alec Gordon," she said, looking him full and defiantly in the eye, "if you dare to follow me or stir before I have got to my pony, I'll kill you!"

She was gone before he could think what to do. He heard her breaking through the brush on the steep side of the peak, and, later, shouting Lon Dabney's name farther and farther down the perilous trail. She must have gone mad, he thought. Yet he made no move to follow her. In a torpor of disgust and shattered hopes he lay on his face, cursing himself for a blundering fool, and watching, vacantly, the embers die.

Meanwhile the girl had slid and stumbled and groped her way down the trail, heedless of everything. Earlier, when she had insisted upon venturing the descent in quest of help from the ranch-house, she had speedily returned to Gordon on the peak, for the pitch-black darkness of the trail seemed filled with terrors. She fancied that she could detect the stealthy tread of a mountain-lion; at every step among the broken rocks she expected to hear the sickening whir of a rattler; and the yelping of a pack of coyotes far down below her warned her that the run across the mouth of the cañon would be worse than the terrible timber. But of all this she now thought nothing. Finally Lon heard her halloo, and answered it. In five more

minutes she broke breathless into the little clearing where her pony and Gordon's horse were tethered.

"I sure didn't expect you-all befo' eight, miss," apologized the lanky Virginian, rising awkwardly as Brook ran up to where he lay smoking under a great oak. "You ain't alone, are you, miss? Where all is that good fo' nuth-in' Alec at?"

"Don't ever mention his name to me again!" commanded Brook, busy with saddling and trying not to cry.

"Cert'n'ly, miss, with pleasure—but what's the matter, Miss Brook?" the simple-hearted fellow asked, when he caught the sound of a sob. "'Tain't none of my business, but ef Alec Gordon have said anythin' or done anythin' that he'd oughter be ashamed of hisself—why, 'Lonzo Fairfax Dabney don't jest 'xactly like to wait tell mo'n-in' to exto't a suitable apology from that gen'leman, miss."

"Come on, Lon, that's a dear fellow. I'm all in. Ride home with me. Alec's all right."

And Lon, happiest when mutely carrying out the behests of the little Cuyamaca school-teacher—the light and joy of his gentle heart—rode down the mountainside close at her pony's heels. Neither Brook nor her knight-errant spoke a word until she bade him good night and enjoined strictest confidence upon him at the ranch-house door.

The Old Man and Mrs. McNabb were entirely satisfied with the daredevil little teacher's statement that she had lost her way somewhere up beyond the peak. Lost, in all truth, Brook had cried herself to sleep.

II.

Empty months followed. Nobody ever so much as mentioned Gordon. He had come, as the others had come, unheralded and unknown; he had gone, as went the rest, unexpectedly and unmourned. McNabb never discussed his herders with his wife and their boarder, the school-teacher. So Brook had to worry and wonder in secret after Gordon disappeared. Of course she

could never forgive him. But it would have been such a relief to hear *something*; where he had gone, whether or not he was trying to live down his past.

Silence, being the dark-room in which women develop negatives, led to much developing during those weary months. And the resultant portraits of Alec Gordon were, she had to confess in spite of everything, those of a man of splendid powers. Was that black last night on the peak just a dream?

News of him came most unexpectedly.

The night after McNabb and the boys reached home, after the big cattle-drive across the desert, he chanced to say at supper that he had run upon Alec, looking fit as a fiddle and prosperous as a banker, in the Imperial Valley. Brook jumped, but held her tongue. Lon Dabney would be the one to talk to.

Each day, on her way to and from school, she stopped her pony on the ridge just this side of Harper's, whence one may see the desert stretching away to the eastward and the Salton Sea looking like a silver mirror. Somewhere down there, beyond those eighty miles of glistening sand, lay the Imperial Valley; somewhere beneath that shimmering white heat he was doing—what? Oh, if she only knew!

It was on the ridge that she met Lon, finally, one afternoon, as he was bringing back in triumph a fractious steer that had got away into the break-neck country behind Little Rattlesnake Peak. Dabney was chanting one of his old-time love-songs when he spied Miss Westover, blushed, slid from his saddle, and came to her side, hat in hand.

"Lon," she began, without other salutation, "what's the Imperial Valley like? You've been there?"

"Yes, indeedy, miss, I've been there mo'n twenty times, I reckon. As fo' what so't of a place it is, I can't jest say, fo' it all depends, I reckon, on what so't of a man it is who goes there. You see, miss, it's this here way, down to th' Imperial country; ef a man don't perpose to tote his fair share of the heat

and burden of life, why, then, the valley's hell—ef you'll pahdon me sayin' so; but ef a man has the reel makin's of a gentleman in him, why, then, Miss Brook, they ain't no better place on this yearth fo' sweatin' out of a man the devilment that they is in the best of us. *Hot?* Lawd Gawd! But they are calculatin' to turn the wilderness down yondah into a gahden which will blossom like the rose, miss. You never see sech meracles in youh life as they are workin' down there—irrigatin', you know, miss. Monst'ous ditches criss-crossin' the country eve'y which way, and big nuff fo' the combined navies of the world to sail back and fo'th between the orchard rows."

Brook smiled. She gazed with new eyes across the desert. Who could say that Gordon might not be "sweatin' out the devilment that they is in all of us" in some corner of that blistering wilderness, which men "with the real makin's of a gentleman" were already turning into a garden of heroic conquest and ultimate glory? She recalled now with almost exultation that she had heard McNabb descant upon the coming days when the Imperial Valley would produce the richest harvests in all California; and that it was an Eldorado for any young fellow with the right stuff in him.

Then she and the Virginian rode slowly home. The negatives developed that night were of the sort of man to whom the blessed, strenuous, hot, soul-testing Imperial Valley might prove a purifying purgatory—to end in victory.

"Did you happen to hear what Alec was doing?" ventured the school-teacher one evening when McNabb remarked that he thought of crossing the desert again to fetch a herd of yearlings.

"Happen to hear of Gordon?" asked the Old Man, laying down his paper and staring at her over his spectacles. "Why, sakes alive, Brook, Gordon's the whole outfit down to them irrigatin' works, slickest engineer that ever tackled the properstion of reclaimin' the whole desert. He's a wonder, they say, when it comes to figurin' out them puzzlin' engineerin' questions."

"Is he?" asked Brook casually, and with her face bent low over the composition which she was correcting. "He was only playing at cowboy, then?"

"Sure!" grunted McNabb. "You didn't suppose that I was payin' him fur playin' golf and polo all over the ranch, did yer?"

"And that accounts for his havin' his corner of the bunk-house littered up with all them furreign books, I suppose?" inquired Mrs. McNabb, to whose motherly mind the fastidious cowboy had been a riddle.

"Sure!" replied McNabb. "The doctors warned him agin' stayin' down to the valley too long at a stretch, so he asked me ef he might come up here off and on durin' the winter, where he could figure jest as good as he could down below, and drink his skin full of milk and cream into the bargain. Queerish feller, Alec was, or I never seen one."

Brook had listened with quickly accumulating emotions of many varieties, and when the Old Man picked up his paper again she slipped up-stairs unnoticed and threw herself on her bed.

For reasons of her own, Miss Westover refrained from opening the subject of the famous young engineer of Imperial with Lon Dabney, but no other subject suggested itself whenever she chanced to meet any of the other boys. And she was amazed to discover that all of them cherished a feeling of no little respect for the good-for-nothing cowboy, whose laziness and all-around incompetence had shortened the long winter evenings and turned the bunk-house into a circus, in which Gordon was the clown and the butt of the experts.

"Cert!" chuckled Bud Talbot, in summing up. "We knowed as soon as we seen 'im that the Old Man had drawn a blank, as fer as punchin' steers was concerned, but Alec hadn't been here twenty-four hours before we all knowed one other thing; that he was white, and the last man you wanted to try monkey-in' with, see?"

That was a memorable trek across the desert after that herd of yearlings.

Brook went. Mrs. McNabb took it into her head, thanks to adroit maneuvering on Brook's part, to accompany the cavalcade, and it was the easiest thing in the world for the school-teacher to arrange to spend her Easter vacation by going along, too. Lon Dabney appointed himself Miss Brook's personal esquire.

They traveled only by night, resting during the heat of the day beneath the *ramadas* of canvas stretched upon four poles. And as they rode along in the marvelous starlight of the desert each night Lon discoursed of sentiment in the abstract, hummed his plaintive love-songs—his repertoire seemed to contain only pathetic ditties—and otherwise strove to approach the climax of two years of heart-searching and day-dreaming. It was reached on the third night.

"Shut youh eyes, miss," he said, after a long prelude of poetic imagery, "shut youh eyes and endeavor to behold what this here desert will look like after the benediction of water has touched its parched and desolate heart. And then, miss, open youh sweet eyes and behold what ma own heart and life would blossom into, ef you, the deah blessed Brook, should cawndescend to water it with youh 'ffections! Youh name, miss, has been music in ma eahs; I nevah heah it 'thout thinkin' about the gentle murmah of the watahfall in the mossy dell, and the gurglin' creek that used to run behind the chicken-house at ma old home in Virginia. I've loved you, miss, evah sence I first saw youh dear sad face lookin' so tenderly down at Jeff Bristow when he broke his leg that time. And evah sence that night when Alec Go'don asked me to ride up on the peak so's you'd feel safer—ridin' back, you see, miss, with the two of us—why, Miss Westovah, I've felt like life wa'n't worth livin', unless you——"

"Did Mr. Gordon ask you to come up on the peak that night?" asked Brook, reigning in her pony and bewildering Lon by her eagerness over so trifling a matter. "Why have you never told me this, Lon?"

"Because, miss," answered Dabney gently, "you told me, you recollect, that I musn't nevah mention Alec's name to you again, miss."

"So I did," muttered Brook, with irritation, "but I wish I had known all this before. Why did Alec ask you to ride to the peak?"

"Becose, miss, he 'llowed that he was goin' to try to induce you to wait to see the sunset and the early twilight stars up there with him, and he didn't want you to feel sceered, you see, miss. He did me th' honah to think that ef you reckoned I was close by, you would feel safe."

"And I did, Lon, God bless you!" cried Brook, her heart swimming with wild joy. "Mr. Gordon intended to ride down to meet you?"

"At eight o'clock, miss. He seemed like he jest had sot his heart on havin' you enjoy the sunset and the first blink-in' stars up there with him. He was fo'evah goin' up to the peak hisself to see the sunset. Fo' a New Yo'kah, Alec was cert'nly a gentleman of consid'able imagination, miss."

Then the talk came back to the great question; and Brook gently said the words which banished him from heaven perhaps, but which, spoken as she spoke them, have lit up the outer limbo where he must evermore dwell with a nameless glory.

If the nights were wondrous, the desert dawns were sublime. And in the dawn of that very night, as they rode slowly on among the weird cactus, with here and there a century-plant sending its lofty spear into the quivery opal air, and the morning star hung, a portent of deep peace, high in the gilding east, they met the herd of yearlings.

At their head rode Gordon, shout-

ing lustily as he came up to them. He had heard of McNabb's purchase, and had recruited a band of herders on his own account, "just to show you mountain cow-punchers," he explained to McNabb, "that we desert tarriers are not so slow."

"Anyhow," he added for Brook's benefit, "I left the ranch last time without saying good-by to the ladies, so I thought I would hike back and make good."

At the foot of the long zigzag Oriflamme grade, up which the string of cattle was winding, Indian file, and at whose crest lay the empire above the clouds, of which she used to talk so much, he spoke to her, he, the daring and resourceful conqueror of the Imperial Valley.

"My emperor!" she murmured. And they rode on.

There were great doings at the wedding, which took place when school closed for the summer, and as if to perpetuate his reputation for queerness, Gordon decided that the honeymoon would be passed in a tent on the peak. Lon Dabney joyously helped "tote" the provisions to the summit, and he alone was invited to smoke a pipe with the bridegroom on their first night in camp. He said good night early, and as he groped his way down the dark trail Brook and Gordon heard him singing:

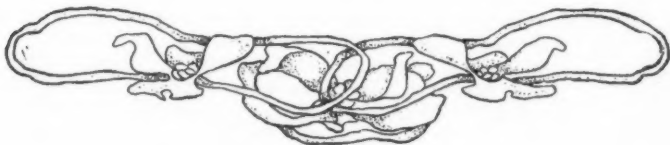
"There is a future, yes, thank God!

Of life this is so small a part.

'Tis dust to dust beneath the sod,

But there, up there, 'tis heart to heart."

And the awful hush of the mountains filled the world when his voice died away, at last, far down the cañon. Only the stars remained, the stars and they two.



THE MUSK OF THE MAIZE

By Jane W. Guthrie



THE son of a murderer!" The words fell into silence heavy and inert.

"The son of a murderer!" Cornelius Armstrong repeated the phrase vindictively, his thin, curved lips drawn back from his crooked, irregular teeth, and his dark face distorted with rage as he added: "And he has been nominated for prosecuting attorney of the county of Wales and the city of Shawanoe!" But in the repetition men stirred restlessly in their chairs, and anger and the protest of denial flamed in the eyes fixed upon him as if their shocked indignant gaze had witnessed the wanton desecration of a grave.

If the Honorable Cornelius Armstrong had meant to carry conviction and shame to the members of the central committee of the Regular party gathered at headquarters, his words failed of their purpose. The committee was not unaccustomed to the rages of the Honorable Cornelius, nor intimidated by them; they had witnessed them often before; nor were they ashamed of their chosen candidate or diverted from their chosen course. Armstrong had been absent traveling abroad for a year, and his associates removed from the whip of his presence during that time had learned to do their own thinking; consequently the force of his anger was misdirected. It merely served to snap the thin-worn thread of allegiance to the speaker.

Judge Bascom raised his head and looked coldly at Armstrong as he sat

beside a table, his lips pursed out and his whole heavy frame arranged for the display of righteous indignation.

"It was never proven," the judge spoke gravely, slowly, "that our candidate's father, Andrew McLean, killed Nicholas Castine. I sat in that trial, and all the evidence went to prove that McLean did not kill Castine."

The judge and his manner were in themselves a rebuke to Armstrong, a rebuke which he chose to ignore or was incapable of receiving.

"Why did he never deny it?" Armstrong slapped the table vigorously, in an effort to emphasize doubt. "Why did neither jury in two trials exonerate him? He was heard to accuse himself of having deprived a mother and sister of their only support. And why did he shut himself up on Doctor Delaney's farm and never afterward hold communication with any one but the necessary laborers and Doctor Delaney, whose charity he accepted, if he were not ashamed to face his fellow creatures? The evidence of his conscience stands for itself." Armstrong's tones were those of contemptuous declaration rather than inquiry.

The judge rose to his feet, his towering form and snow-white hair picturing some old Bible patriarch and defender. He swept the speaker with a piercing gaze as if he were trying, it would seem, to read the inmost heart of a cherished hate; then he waved his hand in dismissal of Armstrong's thought, and his voice, though it trembled with indignation, softened as he said:

"So keen a sense of the value of human life, Armstrong, and so keen a

sense of justice that neither you nor I can appreciate it. He felt himself a moral murderer. He felt a moral responsibility for the death of Nicholas Castine, and himself unfit to associate with his fellow beings. Quixotic, if you will, but there are not many of us blessed—or cursed with such sensibilities. But, perhaps, you do not know it; I happened on it by accident. Andrew McLean supported Nicholas Castine's mother and sister and they accepted his aid during his lifetime, and he made provision for them after his death; and this by his wife's wish as well as his own."

The judge turned and glanced about the room calling to his assistance the sympathy of thought that he read in every face there, with the exception of Armstrong's.

"You all remember," he urged, "that is most of you, Andrew McLean twenty-five years ago. Brilliant, successful, just married to the woman of his choice, pretty Mary Andrews, the loveliest girl in this town; an ideal friend, and ardent partizan"—the judge smiled slightly—"he was of Scotch parentage.

"Castine had been guilty of double-dealing in some political matters, and Castine"—the judge hesitated—"Castine was French and—impulsive. McLean, who had just heard of Castine's misrepresentations that morning, accused him at the polls when they met and they had some hot words. On the night of election—it may be some excuse, it should not be so considered—they had both been drinking. When the returns were coming in and the whole town was alive with excitement and strain, Castine wild with fancied wrongs sought out McLean and precipitated a riot. In a few moments the whole place was in an uproar. Castine was shot. McLean did not do it. I know he did not." The judge let fall his gold-headed cane on the floor with a thud that emphasized his words. "He was incapable of taking another man's life, and the shock of it drove him away from his fellows."

"Who did take it then?" sneered

Armstrong, as he looked up curiously at the judge from under his frowning brow, more as if asking for information, testing the judge's complete knowledge of events, than to continue the argument. "Castine was standing just in front of McLean who was threatening to knock him down. McLean was not slow of temper," he derided, "and the gleam of the pistol-barrel was seen right under his arm. Castine was shot so close at hand that his clothes were powder-burned."

"That was all brought out on the trial," conceded the judge, "but every man in that crowd had a revolver out—you were there." His piercing gaze again covered Armstrong. "Andrew McLean never carried a revolver. He did not possess one. That was well proven; but how could Andrew McLean tell who shot Nicholas Castine, if the murderer chose to"—the judge hesitated again—"or was helped to get out of the way in that surging, rioting crowd?"

The question was asked in a tone that was deeply impressive, and sorrowful almost to melancholy, with an underthought that even Armstrong could not but recognize; but it broke to indignation, as the speaker turned to the group of men sitting back of him.

"And you all know that Andrew McLean accepted no charity. He took Doctor Delaney's fine farm just when the doctor was most reluctantly considering its sale because the practise of his profession took up all of his time, and he managed it so well and so thriftily that he made a fortune out of it for the doctor and enough for himself to leave a comfortable income for his wife and son when he died. You know he did that." The judge, positive in his assertion, demanded accordance. "You know that he educated Allen, his only son, as he would have educated him—under other circumstances. That the boy repaid him well in love and devotion. He took honors at college. And I know him." Here the judge's voice rose in trembling but imperative accents, as he struck the

floor hard with his stick; then the words melted into those mellow tones with which the speaker could always thrill his listeners: "I was his father's friend. The boy read law in my office. I gave him his first case. He is *my* candidate for prosecuting attorney for this county; and I mean to see him elected."

The judge nodded his head at Armstrong, his snow-white locks ruffling up around his head like a crown.

"He has never said so to me," he continued as he turned again to the group back of him, "but I believe that the boy means to clear his father's name and memory. That it is the sworn purpose of his life to unearth that buried secret which has troubled us all for twenty-five years: Who killed Nicholas Castine?"

Armstrong rose slowly; his body growing gross from self-consideration moved heavily, but his face was blacker than ever with the evil anger of revenge.

"Your candidate will never be elected—never!" His thin lips closed conclusively. "The county will never permit it. Andrew McLean's name still stands on the records charged with murder; though the jury disagreed in two trials, he lived under the jurisdiction of the court. The story will be used against the son. You'll see. Oh, nollod by death!" he sneered as he jerked up his hat angrily and walked with visible disgust toward the door which he slammed heavily after him as he left the room.

The judge followed deliberately, putting on his hat slowly. He shut the door softly behind him as if long contemplation of human failings and evil passions had taught him to deal gently with all men—even Armstrong. And when he had climbed the steps to Allen McLean's office, and stood in the doorway surveying the room and its occupant, the irritability which he always felt when with Armstrong vanished. There was something calming in Allen McLean's very presence. A consciousness perhaps of power and innate strength picturing itself in the way the

head was set on the lean, well-knit shoulders, in the fine, firm mold of the lips, in the serene lack of hurry or eagerness as he rose to welcome his visitor.

The judge often marveled over that wonderful poise of McLean's. It was so unyouthful. He seemed in his short twenty-six years to have mastered the secret that many men waste a lifetime over—the knowledge that life and its gifts lie within one's self and not in externals; and he was willing and determined to work them out.

As the judge sat down thoughtfully and a trifle breathlessly in the chair that McLean offered him, he announced: "Armstrong has thrown down the glove. He won't support you." But he added as he looked up at the younger man a bit wistfully, for the judge was a good politician: "You couldn't make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, could you?"

Allen threw back his head and laughed until every one of his even white teeth gleamed in his sun-burned face under his shock of reddish-brown hair. "Why, judge," he replied, "he looks upon me as his personal devil. He thinks I'm a good thing to try his powers of resistance of evil."

"I know, I know," agreed the judge, appreciating the humor of Allen's view, "but," slowly, "he has a great deal of influence. He's been assuming virtues for so many long years that somehow people have come to believe that he owns them."

"He believes that he's a peculiar people chosen of God, and that life as an outer garment is cut to his exclusive fit, and that my outer clothing is a misfit."

Allen laughed in such naive enjoyment of the contrast, with that frank, companionable laughter which was one of the secrets of his popularity, that the judge had to join him.

"He's so busy cultivating that well-loved person of his and taking whatever lies within reach to eat and to drink, and to save and to spend, that he has no time to cultivate the inner graces, or morals, or anything so ele-

mental as common honesty, the kind that makes no parade on the outside. No," positively, "I won't consider him for a moment; I couldn't. I don't believe his enmity can hurt me much after all."

The judge's eyes lingered on Allen's face. Whatever he knew about Armstrong's poses, he knew that Allen McLean never posed. He was always Allen McLean, honest and fearless, and quick as a flash, with the blue eyes of power that promised his future. His long, tall, muscular frame was won by living close to Nature, and defying the elements, physical and mental, which had encompassed him as the son of a farmer and the inheritor of a tragedy. The judge considered the expression in his frank blue eyes contemplatively, then he leaned forward with the persuasive hint of intimacy which was the outgrowth of association with the younger man.

"He has a long score against you on his mental blackboard, Allen. He never got over your mother's rejection of him, or to put it more accurately, he never got over your mother's acceptance of Andrew McLean, your father. Your father and he were rivals for honors at the bar of this county, and unfortunately, or fortunately—the judge's eyes twinkled—"Andrew McLean won nearly all of the cases Armstrong lost. Armstrong used to eke out his income, after he began to make one, by loaning money on good farms or valuable crops in trouble at rates that he didn't care to have known. He needed watching in his little transactions, and on one occasion, after the flagrant fleecing of a widow, your father told him so, and added that he meant to make it his personal affair to preserve the balance of power in the county. That touched his pocket and his vanity both, his greatest assets and the only mediums by which one can reach Armstrong. You'll have a fight on your hands with him, and look out! He doesn't fight your way. His methods are seldom visible and never bear scrutiny."

The judge rose, put on his hat, walked toward the door meditatively

with Allen's amused eyes following him; then he turned, hesitated a moment, walked back and said casually, though he averted his eyes:

"Since he's got back from his much-talked-of year in Europe, he is eager to have it known that he saw a great deal of Constance Delaney and her mother who are living in Italy. It is said"—the judge spoke more casually—"that he and Constance are engaged. He's forty-seven years old!"

The judge snorted with disgust, as he turned to walk away, not however before he had seen the scarlet come rushing up over Allen McLean's face dyeing even his neck and ear-tips; the elder man had never seen Allen so nearly lose his composure. He left the office rather hastily, and before he had seen the firm set of the handsome lips as Allen turned to some papers on his desk.

But if Allen McLean's eyes fixed themselves on those papers, he did not see them. The judge's last words were ringing in his ears, throbbing before his eyes, obscuring every other vision and thought. He could feel them in the beat of the blood in his temples, in his clenched hands, in the whole protest of his very being. It couldn't be! It couldn't be! Constance Delaney engaged to Cornelius Armstrong? What a monstrous, unbelievable lie!

He rose and stood at the office window looking out into the dull quiet of the summer afternoon on the street, as if he might find something there to still the fret of restlessness that he felt, and then he sat down again at his desk and putting his hands behind his head as a rest, his eyes fixed themselves on the blank white wall opposite. He could not think of Constance Delaney as engaged to any one. Just now, she seemed again to be the elflike little sprite with the gipsy-brown face and the big black eyes, eager to see and do all there was to see and do at the farm to which she came as a child with her father. He remembered her quicksilver ways, her rattling quaint speech, for she talked all day, observing and commenting; and though he himself was

four years older than she, it had been her power of resource and her initiative which had got them both into mischief every time that she was at the farm.

There was nothing that she would not dare, and she had been a constant challenge for care to them all; and though he had not seen her for years and his last remembrance of her was the broken, bruised, and sobbing child that he had picked up in the dusty roadway and carried home to his mother the day that her father had met his death in a runaway accident, he had grown up holding her in his heart as a radiant reality of youth and hope and joy, associated in his inner thought with his ambition of clearing his father's name.

To her he would go when he had won that dear desire and offer it with the love that had grown with his years and strengthened with his days. He had heard of and from her often since her mother had taken the little ten-year-old girl and gone to live abroad seeking forgetfulness of the sorrow that had wrecked their home life; but the fascinating, fearless child had known no change in his affections, she had merely developed into his lady of dreams. And as Constance Delaney, his lady of dreams, she seemed to grow upon his vision now, in an exquisite perfection which was all her own, to smile upon him with that gay delight that thrilled through her speech, her looks, her radiant self, and to promise him that nothing, no one should come between them.

All afternoon he sat with his eyes fixed upon that blank white wall evoking his lady of dreams, but as the shadows of the day darkened and the light began to grow dim and gray the vision faded, leaving him with a chill of foreboding lest all the things that Armstrong had to offer, lest all the years that lay between had wrought another Constance Delaney from the one that he knew and held in his inmost heart.

The judge's eyes, too, had misted a trifle as he walked away from McLean's

office. Somehow he had divined the ripening of the boyish tenderness for Constance Delaney, and he wondered if Armstrong with diabolic perception had done so, too, and had determined to test Fate again in the involution of their lives. The judge knew that no other girl had ever attracted McLean; he remembered that he had often seen the quick flash in Allen's eye at the mention of her name, had noted the careful evasion of any reference to her and the omission of any gossip or conversation about her, as if the subject lay too near his heart to allow of discussion. What a tapestry the devil might weave with the threads that lay at hand in all these lives!

He resolved again to enter with just that much more ardor into the campaign, and to defeat any satanic designs and to direct with discretion the mediums he had to work with; for the judge had been one of the little group before whom McLean had flung down his challenge to his fellow townsmen, and his dearest hopes.

He understood, as did every man among them, that Allen McLean meant to take up his life among them where his father had voluntarily laid his down. That he meant to enter the fields where his father had been beaten, and to meet on identically the same terms the elements against which his father had measured himself, and to conquer. It had been the judge who, leaning forward then, had put his arm around the younger man's shoulder and said: "I'll back you, Allen."

But things moved slowly through the autumn days of campaigning. There were the usual efforts, the open-air meetings through September when the country was sweet with the perfumes of the ripening fruits and grains, and the musk of the maize hanging over the vast cultivated fields filled the atmosphere for miles with its rank, green, sustaining odor. There were pole-raising in this or that township when the harvest-moon was at its full, or afternoon meetings and speeches at the country schoolhouses in the great agricultural tracts; but work as they

would to arouse enthusiasm, the judge, old campaigner that he was, knew and felt that it was up-hill work, and that they made little or no headway against some strange, stubborn resistance which met them with its mysterious power, its passive withholding leaving them no point of attack.

So depressed had the judge become over the outlook in October, that he could think of nothing else. In writing to Mrs. Delaney in regard to some business that he had in hand for her, he could not forbear mentioning it. To the judge there was only one topic of interest, and he wrote:

I am afraid that Allen McLean is going to be defeated for the position of prosecuting attorney of the county of Wales, a position for which he now is a candidate. He has set his heart upon it, but the old story is constantly revived, and country people, who are our large farming population, have strange superstitions and fixed ideas, you know. They cannot consider Allen because they have never been able to persuade themselves of his father's innocence in the absence of the real offender; and I am sorry to say that I am quite sure that Armstrong does not hesitate to encourage this attitude. I cannot understand, can you, the enmity and jealousy that carry over to the second generation? It is too bad!

But if this letter expressed the judge's feelings and apprehensions, it met a quick responsive protest from Constance Delaney when it reached her mother in Italy. Out of the dim mist of recollections it evoked a call and something that teased her with an insistent demand for a more accurate remembrance of half-forgotten events. Search her thought as she would, however, the definite association with the personal protest aroused by the judge's letter eluded her. She made her mother relate to her all of the details of her father's death, the sudden, shocking accident, one September day, as he was returning from a visit to a patient in the country. She heard again all the story of the McLeans, and Andrew McLean's withdrawal from the world in which he had taken so active a part when his friend and associate was killed presumably by his hand; the well-known antagonism and jealousy Armstrong

had formerly felt for McLean; but she could find no clue in any of this to that something that haunted her like a message sent but never delivered. The spring of it lay hidden so far back in her childish remembrances that she could not reach it. But what was it? Who had told her that thing which she wanted to know? Over and over, night and day, she asked herself this question.

Yet try as she would, search her thought as she did, it eluded yet haunted her. Always she felt that insistent demand on her to recall it. Finally, she begged her mother to take her back to Shawanoe, hoping vaguely that there she might know what it was that teased and questioned her; and in the soft, warm dusk of a November evening, three days before election, Constance Delaney and her mother came back to the home that Constance had not seen since she was a child, and so quietly did they arrive that no one but the caretaker and the servants knew of it. It had been their wish that it should be so.

It could not be otherwise than a surprise then to the judge and Armstrong when they received each a message early the next morning, begging them if not an inconvenience to stop at Mrs. Delaney's on their way down-town about ten o'clock. To Allen McLean to whom a message brought a similar request, the shock of surprise was followed by an amused remembrance that nothing Constance Delaney could have done would have so completely assured him that the years had left her unchanged. It was so characteristic of her to announce in everything that she did the unexpected.

There was some slight discomfort for each of the men in the meeting in the old-fashioned parlor of the long-deserted home, too, for each had supposed that he alone had been expected; each wondered, each observed, each questioned.

There was not the slightest suggestion of a long-shut house in that room, familiar as it had been to every one of these men in former years. Life, a

vivid life seemed to pulse through the atmosphere, to be in the fresh, cool, morning breeze blowing in through the open windows, in the fire crackling on the hearth, in the flowers that were everywhere, in the sunlight that made patches on the old-fashioned carpet and on the furniture of another generation.

Armstrong knew it as the presence of Constance Delaney; the judge suspected it; Allen McLean felt it and absorbed it as native to him, expanding in it until he was a-tiptoe with expectation, knowing that Constance was leading him somewhere and that he was willing to follow, as he always had been. He did not understand the presence of the other men, but though the blood beat in his temples, in his hands, and throbbed through his being with the ecstasy of expectation, he meant to wait her will. He was keyed up to such a point of suspense that anything, everything seemed natural and obvious.

A light footfall sounded in the hall, a few moments after McLean's arrival, and almost before any of the three could go forward, Constance was in the room. A slight but not delicate Constance she was; every curve and line and tint from the round of the cheek, where the eyelashes fell warm, to the soft edge of the up-turned and dimpled chin, and the tip of her white-shod feet that peeped beneath the pink morning frock that she wore, an exquisite perfection. A vivid picture of youth, but with nothing of immaturity, and the glow of her rosy frock seemed almost a part of her personal presence just as the flowers and sunlight and the fire's cheerful crackle had been expressive of the atmosphere of the room. Her dark hair was a soft cloud above her head, a pretty shadow above the brow, beneath which the dark eyes looked out with a soul unafraid of life and instinct with it—the best that it offered.

She stood still for the fraction of a second as she crossed the threshold of the room as if she were individually placing each of the three, and then she moved quickly forward with a sweet and charming grace which was in her smile, in the soft sparkle of her eyes,

in the parted lips that breathed her collective greeting. Her hands held clasped an odd and worn little black book.

"How good of you to come at my request!" she murmured. And each man took it as a personal gratitude, for the voice was so gentle that it was like a caress.

Armstrong had moved impressively forward as if to claim the greater share of attention, and stood beside her looking down protectively at the slight, dainty little figure; and the judge, too, moved toward her with fatherly instinct; but though she smiled up at the judge, she begged them both to sit down as she turned to face Allen McLean who stood as he had stood when she came into the room, his elbow on the mantel-shelf, his eyes fixed upon her as if his whole being had suspended motion to watch her.

As he met her eyes, he came eagerly forward, took both of her hands in his, and as she smiled a half-shy, girlish smile, he said: "Constance!" with so much feeling that Armstrong fell petulantly into a chair and the judge turned away to find his. Then Allen walked back to the mantel-shelf, beside which he stood to watch and listen to Constance Delaney.

"I sent for you all," she said, "because I have something to tell you. It has seemed to concern every one of you." She turned to the judge. "When your letter came to mother telling her of Allen's candidacy, and the influences"—she hesitated—"against which he was working, it seemed to rouse in me some half-forgotten memory, a dim vision that moved forward out of a shadowy past to claim my attention. I could not recall it nor place the association, so that I begged my mother to bring me back home. Last night after I went to bed in my own old room with childish associations flowing about me and claiming me I forgot the other haunting message that had brought me half across the world; I could think of nothing but the perfumes that blew in through the open windows, the odors of autumn and the night. You all know

them, but they were strange and yet vaguely familiar and sweet to me, and I found myself analyzing them—the faint, smoky waft from burned leaves, perfumes from the late roses in the garden, the fragrance of ripening fruits, and yet, still, there was another, a deeper tone, seemingly underlying all of the others.

"I could not remember what it was, it eluded me just as the message had eluded me. I fancied it was the ghost of a very rank and powerful perfume, just as the message that had come to me through the judge's letter was the memory of a very vivid happening. I could not remember either one of them, and half-fretfully I dropped off into a light doze.

"Suddenly—I roused up and sat up straight in bed. Why"—Constance threw out her hands with an expressive gesture, a whimsical half-smile of contrition on her lips—"I knew that perfume, or rather that ghost of a perfume which was blowing in through the open window. It was the musk of the maize. I laughed at myself that the strong, invading odor of the ripening maize as it hung over the fields outside of town should ever have eluded me, even though it had faded into the memory of its pervasiveness and was now the scent of the dry and ripened stalks.

"I lay there in the soft, sweet dark recalling those great, green spreads of maize a month or two earlier, with the dusty, tawny roadways between and the sweet, cool gleam of the distant river curving in and out about those fields as it slipped through fringed aisles of enormous cottonwood-trees, and then—instantly, like a thing of life the message that I had come to seek was mine. Like a thing of life it sprang at me out of those green fields of maize, out of the dusty roadways between, and I knew, Judge Bascom, I knew why your letter had brought me back home. My book of memory unrolled vivid, living pictures with photographic distinctness. I want to show them to all of you."

Armstrong rose and changed his chair; the judge stirred slightly in his, preparing himself to listen with judicial

consideration; but Allen McLean, with all his heart and soul in his face, did not stir from his position by the mantelpiece, where he could look down on the girl in pink sitting in the middle of the room, her lovely hands folded over a little worn, black book, that somehow looked like the book of Fate.

Constance moved farther out to the edge of her chair, with a touch of eagerness in her manner, a slight acceleration in her always rapid but smooth speech.

"One afternoon, when I was a little girl," she said, "I found myself driving along the dusty roadways, between the marching fields of maize, chatting lightly to my father who was on his way to visit a patient in the country. He was preoccupied and watchful of a young horse, and I grew quiet, because I knew that I had not been taken along for company, but because I had begged to go, and it was tacitly conceded on these occasions of mental preoccupation that I was not to be a bother.

"We stopped at a poor little country cabin, and my father tied the horse and left me sitting in the buggy while he went in to make his visit, but I grew impatient and crept up to the door of the cabin and peeped in." Constance clasped her hands nervously, and her breath came a little rapidly. "I can see it as plainly as if it were pictured before me now. As I sat there on the wooden step, I knew I was in the presence of something strange. It filled me with fear and yet it fascinated me; I wanted to run away and I wanted to stay; and peeping into that room from the edge of the doorway, I stayed. The flies buzzed in and out in the sunshine, the chickens clucked about, a negro woman was drawing water from a well with a well-sweep that creaked, and there was the slow, inevitable tick of the clock on the wall; but the bed!"

She came to it at last, her vision purposely, it seemed, traveling slowly toward that central vital fact. Her voice fell a note lower.

"On the bed, with the four yellow posts and the quaint blue homespun counterpane, a man lay propped up with

pillows. He was speaking hurriedly, excitedly, with only a short time to talk and much to say. His face was ashen-gray, with purple lines about the mouth and eyes, and his breath came brokenly, gaspingly. He was charging with solemn oaths and appeal, to my father and another man who sat there writing down what he said, to "set his conscience free," he called it. The man who was writing was a lawyer, and he told my father he had a claim on the little patch of ground called a farm. They both of them swore that they would immediately make public what was told them."

Constance spoke with deep gravity. Instinctively, she was acting the scene for them, as she visioned herself a character in a drama that she had lived.

"As if to emphasize what he said, the dying man raised his arms upward with a despairing energy.

"'I've been a coward! I've been a coward!' he wailed, his hoarse voice dropping to a whisper, the abject depths of self-abasement. 'I've let another man suffer for my crime!' Then he lifted his head fiercely, threw his arms out wide with a hideous, malicious laugh. 'But I'd do it again! He stole my girl from me. That's why I killed Nicholas Castine!'"

For one second there was absolute silence, and then the sound of a man's deep-drawn breath, and Allen McLean almost in a bound stood in the center of the room beside the girl sitting there. Upon his face was the light of something sublimely beautiful. The faith and trust he had known for his father had blossomed into the man's own personal appreciation of the gift this girl had given him. But Constance's voice carried on the story; her upraised hand stopped him.

"Peeping around the doorway with fascinated, fearful eyes, I saw my father lift the man up and I saw him sign two papers, one of which the lawyer took and put in his portfolio, and the other my father took, and folding it carefully put in the flap of his prescription-book. I jumped back into the buggy, and the lawyer came out and

drove away, while my father stayed until the man fell asleep, and he had put him in charge of the negro woman. Then we, too, drove away. The man died that night, my mother says. I did not tell my father what I had seen because I was frightened—there seemed to be a hush on the day—and because—suddenly—a rabbit scurried across the dust in the roadway and startled the horse to unmanageable fright! Oh!"

Constance crushed her hands against her lips. She sprang to her feet and turned to Allen McLean with wide, frightened eyes. The anguish, the terror of that day was on her again. Again she was a dusty, shrieking, inhuman-looking little object crawling out of the wreck of the broken buggy from which the horse had kicked himself free. Again she was running down that tawny ribbon of roadway between the wide cornfields toward something that lay there prone, broken, inert. She put her hands over her eyes, but Allen McLean took them in his warm, close grasp. The other men had risen to their feet.

"No! No!" she cried. "Don't stop me! Let me tell you the rest."

"Last night, as I remembered it, I got up and went down to my father's study, to find the book if I could that my mother had told me had been put untouched in his desk that dreadful day. When I opened the door of that little room, which had been closed so long, and went in, the place seemed full of his presence. I was again surrounded by his enveloping love. I was sure that he was there, and that he approved and welcomed my coming. I was sure of it. I had only my candle, and in the dim dark I walked over and unlocked his desk, and there, right under the flap, was that little book, placed there years before—a man's freedom from the fret of conscience and the stain of suspicion. My father had meant to use it. It was left"—she hesitated—"for me to do."

She turned and laid the worn, black book in Allen McLean's hands; her voice sharpened quickly until it cut the almost breathless silence of the room.

"I knew the signature at the end of that paper. That lawyer's name as it lay beside my father's under the man, Alex Grimshaw's, the man who had made his confession to him. I knew it even before I had opened the paper. It seemed to me that I had always known it." She turned to Armstrong. "It stared up at me with black letters. It was the price of a dishonored trust."

Armstrong turned with a sneer on his lips. There was not the slightest consciousness of chagrin or shame in his face. He started to the door, but Constance's voice stopped him:

"A boy trudging home from school that day picked me up as I sat there beside—as I sat there in the dust screaming in despair and beating upon it—with terror-driven fists, demanding recognition. He called the farmers from the fields and then carried me over to the river-bank and wiped off my face and cleansed it with cool, refreshing water. He was only fourteen years old, but tall and strong, and as I wept and wailed, he took my hands in his and said:

"Listen, Constance! It's true. It's true. You've got to know it.' His own brave blue eyes were full of tears, but he scorned to lie or temporize with me. 'It's true. But don't be a coward. Face it and bear it bravely and it will make you strong.' Then he carried me home to his mother, and nothing was clear to me afterward for a long time. But, oh!"

Constance turned to Armstrong, her eyes aflame, her whole figure drawn up to some transfigured height.

"How do you think that boy has 'faced it' all these years?"

Armstrong stalked out of the room, sullen fury and rage in his sneering face as he slammed the outer door heavily. The judge rose, and stepping softly but joyously, followed him outside and closed the door gently behind him.

Constance turned to Allen McLean: "I did not know until last night, until it came to me in the musk of the maize, that it was you who had given me my motto for life: To face whatever came with courage and—a smile."



THE CARAVAN

CAME a slow, weary caravan along the desert's bitter way,
And many hearts grew sick and yearned for promise of a sweeter day;
Then lo, the mirage sprang to birth, city of iridescent dreams,
Whose rosy light, from Beauty's sun, through walls of flowers sifts and gleams.

"'Tis but the desert's lie!" some cried. The wiser answered: "Nay! Not so!
'Tis the reflection, snatched afar, from genuine scenes that truly glow."

Came a slow, tired caravan along the desert ways of sorrow;
Then lo, a mirage sprang to birth, bright picturing Heaven's promised morrow.

"'Tis but religion's lie," some cried. The wiser answered: "Nay! Know ye—
'Tis the reflection snatched afar by Life from Immortality!"

CLINTON DANGERFIELD.

IN MUSICLAND

By William F. Armstrong



As soon as I put my feet on the stage, I am in my rôle," Hector Dufranne said. For an hour he had been giving his impressions of those rôles themselves.

It is one thing to see a notable artist from in front of the footlights, and another to hear from him, face to face, the impelling ideas of his interpretations. To view the sketches that a painter has made before creating a great picture is something of a kindred delight. One catches the growth of an idea from conception to completion, losing none of the joy of the finished canvas, and wondering the more at the ability of the brain that created it.

At first Dufranne talked quietly in an impersonal way; presently enthusiasm caught him, sweeping the calm point of view out of sight. Then, words falling short of expression, the illustrating action accompanied it. His feet were on the stage, as the phrase of a moment before had expressed it.

In analyzing a scene Dufranne's concentration of mind is of the complete kind that needs no gradual working up to a situation to realize it, he plunges into it with the opening sentence; his knowledge of all that has preceded it in an opera and his im-

agination suffuse it with present reality.

He sprang into esteem with his very first appearance at the Manhattan, making for himself an individual and picturesque place. "To realize his sincerity and splendid resource to talk with him is unnecessary, but in talking with him one gets a fuller glimpse of powers that will make him yet greater. To have associated with many singers is to know what this means.

You have seen some to whom the whole opera means a single episode that fits their voice; they save themselves for that one moment, and glimmer uncertainly, like a candle in a draft, for all the rest of the performance. Their art, lying wholly in their throat, remains forever undigested. A celebrated prima donna may be a lady who realizes that she has a head only when she catches cold in it.

On the other hand, observation rather proves that those with whom intelligence is the only great asset never get very far with their public. But the fool with a temperament may be the idol of his audiences. Not all fools have temperament, though the proportion is large, neither are all temperamental people fools. Both classes, if their calling is singing, have cause for congratulation. Both will succeed.

For a singer to burn a way into the public mind indelibly, ineffaceably,

means much more than these things; it means a combination of mental qualities that would fit its possessor for success in many another line of achievement than the chosen one; it means supersensitive emotional development, and it means limitless enthusiasm, for that alone brings limitless reserve power.

With Dufranne's portrayals in "Pelleas" and "Jongleur," and the nobility and sympathy supporting them, we are familiar. His ideas on the rôle of *John the Baptist*, in "Salome," as he gave them that afternoon, showed the depth of thought from which he brought up his results, studying and analyzing always alone, seeking out the moving traits of the character as he finds it, then building upon them.

"John," he began meditatively, "is a figure above all other figures in 'Salome'; the very motive that Strauss has given him in the music shows it, grand, broad, penetrating. His purpose is unswerving, the power back of it eternal. The motives of *Salome* and the rest are hysterical, curiously in contrast with his. His very entrance, out of a well, brings to mind the old proverb that we have in France, of Truth rising from that same source. And Truth is the compelling keynote of his personality.

"The impression I hope always to convey on that first entrance is that I am the man who commands, the prophet through whom God is speaking. My spirit is on a higher plane than are those about me; my being, my existence, are of no importance, for without them the prophecy that I bring will go on relentlessly to fulfilment. Whether I die or not is immaterial, my spirit will live in the accomplishment of my predictions.

"Such a personage needs few gestures, the tremendous import is in the message, its unescapable verity, its solemnity; to enforce it, oftener no gesture is needed. In the strongest climaxes I have only to stand immovable, the whole force of the impression must shine from within."

As he spoke, his excitement had grown, not Gallic, but reserved in in-

tensity. Rising, to illustrate what he meant, he took the attitude, firm, motionless, but conveying a power that was boundless, the power of a faith that can move mountains. His face, white under emotion, shone with the spirit behind it, transfigured as of one to whom a vision so mighty had been disclosed, that life, changing places with it, became the unreal thing instead.

Then he sat down quietly. Dressed in a brown business suit, with no outward stimulus, no preceding action to throw him into the mood, Dufranne had given the prophet in his mightiest moment. Emotional resource, imagination, intelligence had seemed with him so many colors to deal with on the palette of his concentration.

It seems an odd contrariety that he was destined for business. At twenty he escaped it by way of the conservatory at Brussels, carrying with him first prize, which he received from the hands of Madame Marchesi, one of the examining jury, and for singing the *Flying Dutchman's* music.

His first great success was in Debussy's "Pelleas et Mélisande," in which he appeared forty times in succession.

"The contentment, the joy of it, that I had done well enough to be reserved from other things especially for that, gave me such an uplift," was the effect which that success had on him.

When, one afternoon, with Perrier, Miss Garden, and the rest, he met Debussy for a first hearing of the work, it was no more an epoch for Dufranne than it was for the composer; the one had a principle to explain, the other was capable of grasping and illustrating it.

Of that meeting, Dufranne said: "His manner was cold, very reserved, but, after he had made one feel as he felt, one was enthusiastic. He knows exactly what he wants, and communicates it, accompanying deliciously.

"With the artist he is severe, demanding that the music be sung exactly as he wrote it.

"When I first heard 'Pelleas et

Mélanide' I was surprised, but not so much so after he had explained it, for Debussy, playing his own music, knew it.

"The system itself had been used by Russian composers for twenty years, Rimsky-Korsakoff and Moussorgsky, for instance, who had applied it in his 'Boris Godounow'—the system of trying to find not song, not melody, but musical speech.

"But if the principle was known, Debussy put that principle into new form and to a new subject, for Maeterlinck's work is as strongly novel as the music with which Debussy reflects it."

Dufranne, who sings with mind as much as with voice, what, then, did he think of those whose one reliance was in their throats? The mentality of the man had prompted the question.

His answer, quietly humorous, half-regretful, half-quizzical, was: "Some with a wonderful voice are lucky in arriving at the right moment. Composers give them a certain part because they are the only ones available for it."

"And the result?"

"A donkey in a lion's skin."

Constantino, the tenor, is a good example of what art in its "elevating" sense really means.

The sunshine of San Sebastian, where he was born, runs in his veins, and sunshine breeds laziness. Study, except of the sky, as he lay on his back, was unknown to him in boyhood.

While the things that coin may bring are numberless, there are only two sides to each piece of it. Man, with all his powers, is equally limited; if he must work he has only two things to work with, head and hands. Constantino, refusing to use the one, had the other impressed into service.

At Buenos Ayres, where he was sent with the trade of machinist, the voice was discovered in the workshop. To Italy after his début, all untaught, at Montevideo in Breton's "Dolores," he went with it. There it was not only music, but people and books that took hold of his life.

"As my associations with people grew, I grew in my work, and growth

in that meant desire to mingle with people of yet higher attainments," was Constantino's experience.

The knowledge that his voice, if it was good enough to do something without training, should do more with it, had meant as well his mental awakening. It stirred in him that which his lazy boyhood had never suggested, desire for achievement.

That is where art is of consequence; otherwise, only amateurs are privileged to write of its elevating potency.

Part of this mental development of Constantino in those days at Milan was due to such men as Carugati, the critic of *La Lombardia*.

Every lounge in the Galleria knows Carugati, with his pipe, his sombrero, and his wholly cynical face that a kindly smile softens.

Personally, it would seem to me that should any man be granted two lives, he could scarcely do better than spend the afternoons of one of them in that same Galleria over black coffee with Carugati. He knows so much of things and of life, and can appreciate so keenly the good in a man or touch so surely the reasons why he does not do better.

The study of five languages opened to Constantino a knowledge of the literature that they held. When music aroused his intelligence, pictures turned out to be reflections of things he had seen in the sky—scanning days at San Sebastian. His home at Plessis Treviso, near Paris, is a headquarters for painters, writers, and sculptors in a world that his voice helped create for him.

The mind really capable of growth is oftener slow in development, sometimes sudden in its awakening. It needed the discovery of his voice to arouse in Constantino a desire to think; before that, exercise of his muscles sufficed him. Mental development from within and without began simultaneously. His new sphere had lifted him into a world of new people.

Latin men and American women are the quickest to grasp new impressions, and to practically utilize them, for the reason that with them these things pen-

trate below the surface and become part of their beings.

New associations stimulated Constantino, books became so many mental vocal exercises; for their application he turned to the melody of life and of art.

Gianoli-Galletti, who does so many humorous rôles at the Manhattan, is immune to seriousness. On the stage or off it, he is forever creating comedy.

In the very beginning of his career this trait helped him out of a delaying predicament—the army. It would be hard to picture Gianoli-Galletti in any but the famed one of Offenbach's "Duchess of Gerolstein," but the law, in addition to a proverbial blindness, has no sense of humor, so it claimed him for military service. This service, being obligatory, was also hard; it meant early rising, much marching, and long guard duty, none of them things dear to the comedy taste. It also meant interruption of his stage career about commencing.

Presenting himself for examination at the barracks in Milan, as ordered, he announced: "I am ill."

"What fails?" asked the officer in command.

"Heart failure," said Gianoli-Galletti, spurred to invention. That got him as far as the military hospital.

"What fails?" he had again put to him.

"Heart failure," was the answer repeated. And Gianoli-Galletti rejoiced that he had chosen a malady requiring no greater outward evidence than he could agreeably assume.

"Come back in a year," was the order.

It had worked! Perhaps, had the medical officer been less busy, it would have worked less well. But for one glorious year, at least, he was free.

Three nights later he made his début in "Don Pasquale." By unfortunate coincidence both examining officers, favoring the arts of peace as well as of war, not only attended the performance, but remembered it.

At the end of a busy twelve months, Gianoli-Galletti returned to the bar-

racks on official invitation. "I am ill," he said. "I've heart failure." And he repeated it glibly to the hospital colonel.

"Sit down," was his polite invitation. "Didn't I see you in 'Don Pasquale' three nights after your last amiable visit here?"

"I don't know," replied Gianoli-Galletti. He had begun to say: "I hope not."

From outside came the bugle-call for drill. If the situation needed any further disquieting impressions he had them.

"How could you act and sing with so much vim with your heart failure?"

"I'm better when I sing," was the answer, accidentally true.

"You're a good artist," came insinuatingly.

Gianoli-Galletti brightened; that compliment was as a rift in the cloud. It opened his confidence.

"You like 'Don Pasquale'?" he ventured.

"I sing a little. I'm something of an amateur myself." Taking down a copy of the score from a shelf, he opened it at a duet. "Suppose we try this together?"

Gianoli-Galletti assented. The sound of the bugle and pounding feet outside were rapidly losing their terrors. Into the duet they plunged together, the colonel taking the soprano part. Forgetting all else in the moment, the opera buffo began to act, so did the colonel. The gaiety became uproarious. The book had been flung into a corner. In the moment of a climax a medical inspector entered.

"Will you kindly examine this gentleman's heart and see if it is palpitating," the colonel said to him suavely.

In the inspector Gianoli-Galletti recognized one of the several to whom he had confided his heart failure.

"I'm better when I sing," he began lamely.

"So it would seem," returned the inspector, beginning his duties.

The colonel sat fanning himself after his recent exertions. "How is his heart?" he asked of the doctor.

"Better than mine," was the emphatic rejoinder.

Things suddenly grew clear. This, then, was the ruse of the military amateur, who had got him to gyrating with abandon in a scene that was simply irresistible. Gloom came down like a pall. Putting on his hat he went home. His heart failure had failed.

But, at any rate, one more day of freedom remained before his feet pounded the stones with the rest in the barracks courtyard. That night his gaiety worked again actively in "Don Pasquale."

When he awakened next morning, with the arrival of his coffee, an official envelope lay on the tray beside it. Regarding it gloomily, he wondered how so little white paper could enclose a whole year of early rising, long marches, and guard duty in all conditions of weather.

Finally, with a groan, he savagely opened it, read it through, turned it upside down, then sideways, then sprang to the floor with a yell of delight. It was an official certificate that he had duly served out his time. One scene from "Don Pasquale" with the colonel had done it. In that scene he had completed a whole year's service to his country; this was official recognition of it, stamped and sealed.

His own sense of humor and that of his colonel, briefly commanding, had brought a delightful solution. Spain, perhaps, if carefully searched, might afford a comedy counterpart, for Don Quixote himself emanated from there, but surely no other country than that one, besides Italy, could present a situation so delicious.

Earlier in his career, shortly after his debut, in fact, and before this weight of suspense which sat so lightly upon him had been lifted, Gianoli-Galletti left Milan for his first out-of-town engagement. At the end of the railway journey came a drive of two hours in brilliant sunshine, through open country, before the small town of his destination rose among the trees. To and fro he sought for a building that even vaguely resembled a theater. None ap-

peared. Alighting with a big bag of costumes in each hand, he asked of a lounging: "Where is the opera-house?"

The reply made him drop both bags in the road. "It hasn't arrived yet. It will come in the morning."

Which it did, and disclosures proved that art there was pursued in a tent.

"Two happy months followed," said Gianoli-Galletti, smiling at pleasant memories of the theater, now, perhaps, gone to rags, where he first appeared in "Pagliacci."

Those who have heard him relate such reminiscences will recall the comical tilt of the eye that goes with them and a broad smile long before he gets to the point of the story.

Life has brought him one gay round of episodes, because, all his life long, he has expected them. Where others would sit down in gloom, he has found humor awaiting him. That is why he appealed so strongly to Alessandro Bottero, the man who discovered him and his teacher, one who, himself, had no slight grasp on the gay side of life, and even beyond it, as his last testament proved when they read it.

At Bottero's house, whenever in Milan, and as one of the family, he happened there when death came to his colleague in gaiety. In a will found, Bottero left this injunction: "Play no funeral dirges in the procession, but something bright and enlivening."

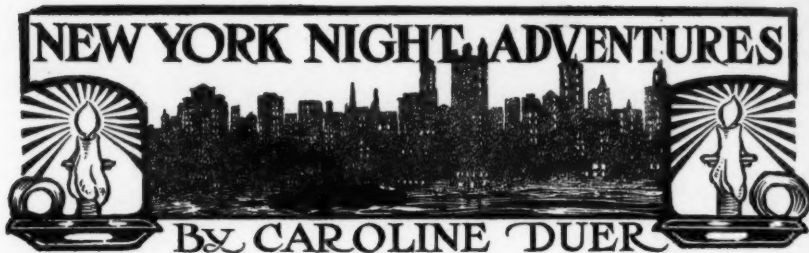
The band was assembled, and Gianoli-Galletti, so tradition says, was deputed as specially competent to make the "enlivening" selections.

But the authorities, shocked at the idea of posthumous amusement from one who had given them only smiles all his life, forbade the innovation. It was not until the cemetery gates closed behind them, being there free to do as they pleased, that the band struck up a polka, while all that was mortal of Bottero was cremated.

"And do you, too, want a polka?"

"I hope to live so long," answered Gianoli-Galletti, his eye tilting upward, "that I shall have much time to decide in."

NEW YORK NIGHT ADVENTURES



By CAROLINE DUER

II.



THOMAS ERINCOURT had done the same things in the same way so very many times! He had methodically got up, and shaved, and dressed, and eaten, and read the morning paper, and gone down-town, to exchange and barter for his own advancement; and then, turning upon that pivot of the day, lunch-time, had retraced his steps through the mazes of business back to more dressing, food, and sleep again; and he really began to feel the man within him yielding up all his spirit to the machine without.

It was in the early spring, at that delightful hour of the evening when lilac street-lamps have begun to tremble in the golden dusk of departed sunset; when the claims of labor are for the moment satisfied, the tension of the day relaxed; and a neatly dressed gentleman outward-bound for dinner—with overcoat thrown back and bold shirt-front presented to the Fates—might well be pardoned for indulging in the desire to walk to his destination.

Mr. Erincourt, having accordingly determined so to do, turned leisurely into Madison Avenue, and had strolled up that respectable thoroughfare for some eight or ten blocks above Forty-second Street, when he observed a crowd ahead of him congregated about a car and an electric cab, which had apparently come into collision at a

crossing. It occurred to him now that his brain had registered the sound of a sharp blow and a long, grinding noise following, even while his thoughts were far away, and he was not surprised on arriving opposite the scene of disaster to perceive that the cab presented as wrecked an appearance as a twisted fender, a dished wheel, and shattered glass could give it, while the car—judge from the rapid descent of the passengers—seemed to have suffered some mysterious internal disarrangement, and was emitting flashes of fire and puffs of smoke. The conductor and the irate and uninjured chauffeur of the electric were engaged in a wordy altercation, while the encircling group investigated the damage and impartially gave ear to both disputants.

Mr. Erincourt after a moment's involuntary pause was about to hasten by on the other side, serene and aloof, when a lady in a black lace cloak, clinging skirts, and an enormous black, feathered hat, somewhat askew, emerged from the cab, pushed through the people about it, and swiftly made her way across the street toward him. He saw that her exceedingly pretty, rather silly face was pale, and that two little slender threads of blood ran down one of her cheeks. He also saw that she was going to address him.

"Oh, please, *do* you think you could get me another cab?" she began, raising a pair of pleading eyes to his. They were blue and pleased while they pleaded. "I can't stay here in the middle of that staring crowd."

"Certainly," said Thomas, recognizing the exigencies of the situation and concealing the slight nervousness he felt. "Only I think—that is, I'm afraid that, perhaps, you ought to go to the nearest chemist first, and——"

"Good gracious, am I hurt?" cried the lady, dropping an elaborate, diamond-clasped beauty-bag she carried, and putting up two delicate, tremulous hands toward her face. "I did not know I was hurt. Am I cut? Is it much?"

Mr. Erincourt quickly interposed his handkerchief between her white glove and the tiny scarlet streaks on her equally white skin.

"It's nothing, really nothing," he hurriedly assured her. "The least prick. Hardly a scratch. But it bleeds a little, and ought to be stopped. A bit of flying glass must have done it."

"Oh, I suppose so," she answered, using the handkerchief with perfect simplicity, and regaining her composure as she observed the very small stain upon it. "It is a wonder I have any features left at all! And, as for my head, I really felt as if it were going to be jerked off my shoulders when the crash came! You've no idea what it was like! Am I all right now?"

Thomas inspected the wound with profound interest, first at close range and then from the ordinary man's distance, and declared emphatically that it was now hardly to be noticed.

"Then do get me another cab," entreated the lady. "You don't know what a hurry I'm in; nor how much depends upon it." She looked impatiently up and down the street as she spoke. "Of course, there isn't one in sight because I want it so much."

"There'll be plenty in Fifth Avenue," said Mr. Erincourt. "Shall I leave you here and go for one, or will you——"

"Oh, I'll go with you. I'm not too disheveled, am I?"

Her companion surveyed her again with a feeling of responsibility that quite amazed him. She was enormously conspicuous, there could be no doubt of that. But somehow she appeared so

used to it as to have arrived—almost—at the stage of unconsciousness.

"I suppose I'm all at sixes and sevens," she observed, as his electrified gaze wandered over the marvelous audacities of her costume.

"No, no, indeed," he replied hastily, "unless—perhaps—your hat; there seems to be a good deal more of it standing out at one side than the other; where the feathers are, you know."

"Oh, that's all right," she returned, laughing, as she patted her hair into place with fingers that seemed to know by a touch the position which each portion of her remarkable head-gear should bear to the other. "That's the way we wear them. You aren't m—that is, you don't take much interest in women, do you? Or you'd have noticed the fashions long ago, if only to protest against them."

"And I presume you *are* m——," said Thomas, with a boldness that astonished himself, "if anybody has been protesting against them to you."

They had begun to walk rapidly toward Fifth Avenue while they were speaking, but at this she stopped short.

"Married!" she cried. "Not now, I thank you! I've seen quite enough of matrimony in the last few days. But it's over. That's one comfort."

She flung out this astounding confidence with the simple directness of a schoolboy who announces to an indulgent elder that he has dropped Greek forever from a curriculum sufficiently trying without it, and she resumed her line of march before Mr. Erincourt could fetch breath to reply.

But his brain was in a whirl. Divorced? This magnificent creature? Or perhaps only about to be? Perhaps flying this very minute with himself—a thought which thrilled him with a not-altogether fearful shiver—from the tyranny of some jealous brute. His spirit soared, but his more cautious step lagged in following her.

As they reached the corner of the street, the lady somewhat ahead, a down-coming cab slowed for them, and its driver raised a hailing whip. It was a shabby-looking old vehicle, but its

chestnut horse was evidently of an ardent temperament, and Mr. Erincourt felt that, whatever the lady's destination, she would be trotted off to it as fast as four feet could cover the ground. He shook his head at a highly varnished hansom with a tubby cob between the shafts, and answered the night-hawk's signal. The better part of valor was certainly discretion, he thought, as he opened the door and assisted in his companion, curbing his tongue from any questions, and his eyes even from another glance at her engaging countenance.

"Will you tell him where you want to go?" he said, as she settled herself with a soft whirl of draperies, which blew out a little breath of subtle perfume.

She put out a detaining hand, touching his at the window.

"What time is it?" she asked, by way of answer.

He consulted the most reliable time-piece in the world.

"Five minutes to eight," he announced, closing the lid with a determined thumb, and facing her courageously.

"Then I've still time to catch the eight-ten from the Grand Central, if he drives fast?"

"I should think so."

"Then tell him! And get in! No. Please don't refuse me. I dare say you've an engagement for dinner. So have I. We'll both be late. But it can't be helped. I've got to find somebody who is taking that train, and I'm all shaken in my nerves, and I can't bear to go alone. Oh, I can see you don't want to go; if you did, I couldn't take you—that's what makes it so all right. Please come, and do hurry. I'm in a perfect flutter. I should think you'd see that—"

The lady's voice broke, and Thomas surrendered. He gave the order and entered the cab. He felt absolutely giddy at the foolhardiness of his proceedings. Something inside whispered that he would repent it, and something else answered that it was high time he

had subject for repentance. He squared his shoulders and told himself that prudence was a mean virtue. His companion gave a little sigh, and he swelled with the pride of protection.

"Oh," she said, "how fortunate I am to have met you! It is not often that one finds a gentleman—the kind that it's safe and sensible to appeal to, you know—just on the spot in such an emergency, is it? I don't mean to say there aren't numbers of nice men about, but some—even of the nice ones—might not have seen that I wasn't making up to them. You're different." Mr. Erincourt smiled. "I could see at a glance you weren't the adventurous sort." The smile faded. "But I'm sure you'll be glad to have helped me over an awkward little place, won't you?"

She hardly gave him time to signify that he asked nothing better.

"You see," she broke in, "I've some papers—letters, that is—that I promised to deliver to my lawyer; at least, my sister's lawyer, before he went out of town. And he's going on the eight-ten. And I've got to find him in all that crowd at the station, and give them to him. You know it's not easy, is it? Especially as he won't be looking out for me."

"Next to impossible, now, I should say," replied Thomas cheerfully.

"No! Do you think so?" she cried.

"Don't say that. Well, I've got to try, anyhow, and you've got to try, too."

"What does he look like? Who is he?" demanded Mr. Erincourt.

She named a well-known light in the legal profession.

"Oh, we'll find him," he assured her, somewhat relieved.

"If only he hasn't gone and got into the train," she wailed. "But I dare say he will have. And Sarah will be so angry! You see, we don't know—we can't be sure—whether the letters are compromising or not. Compromising enough, I mean."

"Compromising!" Thomas fairly gasped.

"Yes," returned the lady, with perfect frankness and simplicity, as if having once resolved to trust him she

did not propose to stop half-way. "Sarah thinks she wants a divorce, and I'm not going to stop her."

"Then it's not—I mean, *you're*—you're *not* married," stammered her companion, hardly knowing he had done more than think the words till he heard himself saying them.

"I?" she exclaimed, in surprise. "Why, no! I *said* I wasn't."

"You said," corrected Mr. Erincourt, "'Not *now*.' That I'll be sworn to."

"Oh, I see." She laughed deliciously. "I meant I never would be, after the exhibition my sister and her husband make of it. They *are* such idiots. They quarrel like a pair of children. And just now *he's* gone off in a rage, and *she* has found some letters—I think it's a tempest in a teapot all round, and rather a *mean* tempest at that, but nothing would quiet her but my promising I'd see dear old Mr. Blanque to-night, and get him to send her word whether she had—had—had any *grounds*, you know, in *these*."

She patted the bejeweled beauty-bag on her knee, and then with a sudden thought picked it up, opened it, and took out a small package of letters. Thomas, all discretion, shrank back a little in his corner.

"I just want to see whether they're all right," she murmured, counting them. "Goodness, what a jolt!" as they swung round into Forty-second Street with one wheel scraping the sidewalk. "This is a game little horse! Shall we do it, I wonder?" And she squeezed her wonderful hat out of the window to look up at the station clock. "Yes, I almost think we shall."

And by all that was extraordinary—or, rather, by the surprise created in the breast of the traveling public at the appearance of the lady, which led to their giving her excited passage through the throng—she did manage to discover and to attract the attention of the worthy gentleman they were in search of at the precise moment when another would have been too late! There he was, arrested in the very act of having his ticket punched at the

gate, and apparently amazed beyond measure at the sight of the blond-and-black vision bearing down upon him.

Her escort stepped aside and watched her exclaiming and explaining, with hands and eyes and tongue all making play. Cowardice urged him to fly. Courtesy demanded that he should remain to see her safely started upon her way again. He remained; gazing at her in a sort of trance, till a sudden rush of outgoing passengers hid her for an instant from his view. He passed a soothing hand over the bewildered wrinkles in his forehead, and as he removed it he saw her coming toward him with the liveliest expression of dismay distorting her features.

"You didn't dismiss that cab, did you?" she cried.

"Why, yes," returned Mr. Erincourt. "I did, because I thought we'd be forever finding him again."

"Oh, heavens!" she exclaimed, with a gesture of despair. "And I've dropped the most important letter in it! *Now* what shall we do?"

"How do you know?"

"How do I know it was the most important? Because Sarah marked it with a double X."

"How do you know you dropped it in the cab?"

"Because they were all right when I counted them then, and there was one missing when I took them out again to give to Mr. Blanque! They were in my bag between whiles, so it couldn't have been in the station. No, it was in the cab. When we went over that jolt, I have a distant remembrance now of something white slipping! And the awful part is, I think—and here her looks became perfectly tragic—"I think it slipped into that place in the door that the window comes out of. I thought at the time it was an old envelope that I'd written some addresses on. Isn't it too dreadful? I *ask* you if anything more unlucky could have happened."

Mr. Erincourt so thoroughly agreed with her that he feared to speak.

"Mr. Blanque's taken the rest," she went on, "though he thinks it's all a

great mistake and very foolish. But what *are* we to do about this one? If you thought it would take forever to find the man when he *was* here, how long is it going to take, now he isn't? There'll be no dinner for me to-night, I plainly see that. And I dare say I sha'n't get home till morning."

"Yes, you will," declared Thomas firmly. "I'm going to send you straight off to your dinner this minute, and then——"

"But what about yours?"

"I'll telephone that I am unavoidably detained, and I'll devote the rest of the evening—the rest of my life, if necessary," declared Thomas, in a whirl of wildness, "to the finding of that cab."

"Perhaps he's loitering about here still," she suggested, as they came out upon the steps. And she paused to let her eyes glance up and down the lines of tangled traffic.

"All the better for me, then, if he is," answered Mr. Erincourt, hurrying her forward. "Now, here's a hansom. Where shall I tell him?"

"But wait! But listen!" She stopped with a high-heeled slipper and a good deal of cobwebby silk stocking displayed as she set her foot on the step. "You've got to know where to send me word when you find the thing. I'm dining with the Townleys——"

"Why, so was I!" exclaimed the gentleman.

"And my name is Arabella Mansell."

"I was invited to meet you!"

"And my telephone number—I mean my sister's—only be sure you ask for me; I'd rather she didn't know—is three-four-three-six thirty-eight. That's easy to remember."

"Impossible to forget."

"Good-by, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Erincourt."

"Erincourt? What a charming name! Thank you so much. So very much. More than I can ever say. And you will let me know at once, won't you? Either at the dinner-party or at my own place? Isn't it odd that we were going to meet, anyhow? Oh, and isn't it strange that we never met before?"

"Very! Very! Very!" cried Thomas giddily. "The strangest thing in the hotel, set out on a systematic quest. To world. All right, cabby. Waldorf-Astoria. You will certainly hear from me, Miss Mansell. Don't spare your horse, driver. The lady's late. Good-by."

The hansom disappeared, and he stood looking after it, his hat in his hand and on his face the blankness of desolation.

"Great Heavens!" he ejaculated. "What am I committed to!" And he put his hat on his head and his hands in his pockets with a gesture of despair.

His predicament was, indeed, one of some difficulty and discomfort. He was hungry, he was harassed, he was startled out of all his accustomed ways, and he had pledged himself to find a compromising letter for an almost unknown woman—toward whom his thoughts turned with an equal degree of admiration and alarm—which letter was lost to sight inside the hollow of a cab door, which cab was lost not only to sight, but probably to all human knowledge in the streets of a great city.

How was a man to trace one disreputable old vehicle, whose number he had naturally omitted to observe, among thousands of others in the length and breadth of New York? He gazed hopelessly about for the high-held nose of a chestnut horse. He had not noticed the driver particularly. In the recognition of that lively beast lay his only chance.

He interrogated the waiting jehus, the police, the loiterers.

Had any of them seen him drive up, and had any of them observed the cab that brought him or its subsequent movements?

At last a sleepy-eyed shoeblack thought he had seen it turn away and pursue a slow course toward Park Avenue. Mr. Erincourt reviewed the rows of conveyances standing at the entrance to the tunnel. There was not a chestnut horse between the shafts of any of them. He selected, however, an animal that appeared less drooping

than its fellows, and a driver who seemed capable of intelligent thought, and, after a bite of dinner at the nearest hotel, set out on a systematic quest. To the park, to squares, to triangles, to livery-stables of all kinds, to every stand or stamping-ground for cabs, to theaters and restaurants later, did the devoted man go, and the more baffling the chase appeared the more doggedly determined he became.

Ten, eleven, twelve o'clock! He changed his weary equipage for another. One, two! He felt by this time that all the town must know the questions he repeated half asleep.

At length, as he gave the order to turn into his own street, he beheld a cab with a broken shaft, and a chestnut horse evidently just yanked to its trembling feet by a befuddled, if not drunken, driver, all of them blocking his way, and causing his vehicle to be brought to a halt at the corner.

He might, like the gentleman in Mr. Gilbert's ballad, have shouted madly: "Found at last!" But the caution of a lifetime is not so easily shaken off. He paid and dismissed his man, and slowly passed and repassed the derelict twice before he felt he could speak with assurance. But his heart bounded within him. He knew the horse! He had come up with his quarry. It was now a question of diplomacy.

"Didn't you drive me to the station at Forty-second Street about eight o'clock, my friend?" he inquired mildly. "I think I recognize your horse."

"I dare say, sir," returned the cabby, gloomily feeling his horse's legs. "Y'ould fool, what ailed you to fall?" he added, apostrophizing it.

"I had with me a lady, a blonde lady in black," continued Mr. Erincourt, to refresh his memory. He had been a bit startled by the address.

"I remember *her*, all right," answered the man, with a show of interest. "Regular beauty *she* was! Hold up, you!"

"She—she thinks she dropped a—a valuable document in your cab."

"Tain't there," declared the other. "There ain't nothing in the cab. And

how I'm going to splice this blamed ould shaft is more than I know," he muttered to himself.

"Would you—would you mind my looking?"

"Look away, but I'd have seen it if it'd been there, sure."

"She thinks it fell between the door and the window. That is, inside the door, you know, where the window runs down."

"Then that's the last she'll see of it," responded the cabman, with a laugh. "The window hasn't moved these ten years."

Mr. Erincourt was surprised to find in himself a disposition to take the man by the throat and choke him. Had he been in pursuit of the wretch the better part of the night to meet with a rebuff? Perish the thought!

"Is there no way of getting the thing up?" he asked, controlling his temper.

"Not without you break the door apart," returned the other, busy with some hairy-looking old string.

Mr. Erincourt walked solemnly to the door by which the lady had sat, and without a word jerked it open.

"Say, what are you doing?" cried the owner of the vehicle angrily.

Mr. Erincourt lighted a match. "I want to be sure it's there, if I can," he replied soothingly.

And by dint of singeing his eyelashes and flattening his nose, he did imagine he caught a glimpse of something white wedged in the narrow space.

"It is there, and I've got to have it out," he said firmly.

"Can't be done, sir," said the cabman, with equal decision.

"I'll have your door mended if I break it."

"No, sir."

"I'll give you a new door."

"Th' ould machine wouldn't hould it, sir."

Mr. Erincourt suddenly felt the blood mounting to his head. Once start a quiet man on an adventurous career and there's no balking him.

"I'll *buy* your cab," he cried furiously, "though it's only fit for kindling-wood!"

The man became grave at once, and left off winding his rope round the broken shaft.

"How much will you give for it?" he asked briefly.

"How much do you want?"

"'Twas a good cab in its day."

"It's a rotten old rattle-trap now."

What bargain was finally struck will never be known. Mr. Erincourt never has disclosed, and says he never means to disclose it. Suffice it to say that at the end of an hour the figures of a man and a horse might have been seen wending their way in one direction, while another man with folded arms and an air of victory was left contemplating the ruins of a disreputable old cab.

It was past three o'clock when Thomas, with a weary yet triumphant step, mounted the stairs to his sitting-room. The very first thing in the morning he would telephone to the beautiful owner of those blue eyes, which had, perhaps—~~now~~ undoubtedly—been anxiously waiting far into the night, the adventurous night that was nearly over. He pictured her worried, wondering, waiting. But there would be good news for her in the morning.

He felt like a knight-errant returning with the spoils of battle.

On his table, in the circle of light thrown by his green-shaded student-lamp, he saw a piece of white paper scrawled over with the writing of his faithful servant.

3436 38 has called up six times, sir, and says will *you* call up, no matter when you come in.

Thomas called up. His heart thrilled as he heard her voice afar off.

"I've got it, my dear Miss Mansell. I've got it," he cried. "It has been a long job, but you need be troubled no more."

And then—*then* he nearly threw the telephone from him in pardonable rage as he caught her answer.

"Oh, dear, dear Mr. Erincourt, I'm *so* sorry. I've been trying to get you for *hours and hours*. It doesn't matter a *bit* about the letter now, for he's come back, and *they've made up!*"

What Thomas said as he hung up the receiver it is not permissible to repeat. He tells his wife now—once Miss Mansell—that she was well worth fifty thousand cabs. But, then, he's very much in love!

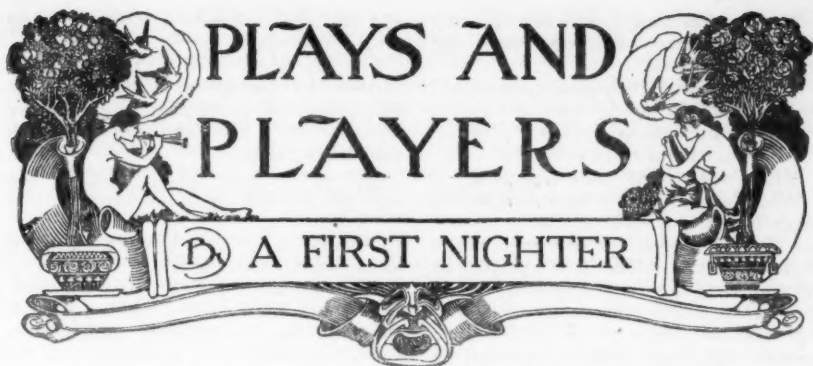


DAWN

A HUDDLING mass of misty shadowiness;
A hush that is the presage of a sigh;
A slight uplift and stir, as wind-wafts press
The shoulders of dusk hills that dormant lie.

A cockcrow, and a twitter in the trees;
A putting out of night-lamps, one by one—
Then rose-tipped cloud-spears, set in panoplies;
Then the gold breastplate of the glad young sun!

WILLIAM STRUTHERS.



PLAYS AND PLAYERS

A FIRST NIGHTER

Eugene Walters' powerful drama of the Great White Way brings Frances Starr new histrionic laurels. Charles Klein's "The Third Degree" an interesting expose of police intimidation, which makes a star of Helen Ware who wins deserved success. Eleanor Robson in a wholesome little play. Neither "Kassa" nor "The Vampire" is particularly attractive. "The Barber of New Orleans" entertaining in an artificial, old-fashioned way. New comedy by Jerome K. Jerome in which Fanny Ward appears. Grist from the musical comedy mill



THE EASIEST WAY," being rather plain-spoken in some respects, has again aroused all the antagonism created in puritanical minds by the exhibition of things in the theater which are generally accepted as unfortunate realities in life. It tells the story of sordid experience in the most direct and impartial way, neither softening the evils of which it treats nor attempting to evade the consequences, and it tells this story in a manner that represents the most complete and modern skill in dramatic narration. Whatever may be the varying opinions as to the morale of such an exhibition as is provided in Mr. Walters' play, no proficient student of the drama will refuse to acknowledge its dramaturgic excellence.

Containing a basic idea similar to that employed by Mr. Pinero in "Iris," it is a shade truer. It is Mr. Pinero's habit to allow himself the pleasure of a literary style even when those who speak his lines could not be supposed to have it. Mr. Walters' characters never

talk by the book. They are men and women of common clay, and their speech reflects in every case the condition of life in which they happen to be found.

The story grips the imagination from first to last, and its emotional exposition is such that it must appeal to any man or woman who still retains a grain of human sympathy. There may be a difference of view-point in moments of cold after-reflection as to the justification to sympathy, but there can be no doubt that, while the spell is on, the sufferings of *Laura Murdock*, sometimes actress, move the heart to pity.

Mr. Walters has gone for his inspiration to the Great White Way, and has pierced through the veneer of gaiety to grim tragedy beneath. *Laura Murdock* has been for a time the mistress of *Willard Brockton*, a Wall Street broker, who is also known as a theatrical "angel." In other words, he provides money for attractions in consideration for favors extended to the women of his choice. During a temporary absence in Colorado, *Laura Murdock* has met and fallen in love with *Jim Madison*, a struggling newspaper

man, who knows her history, but who is, nevertheless, willing to make her his wife as soon as he feels in a position to support her comfortably. *Brockton* frankly advises the younger man that he can only hope to hold *Laura* if he has lots of money, and promises, if the woman ever comes back to him, to make her write a letter to *Madison* telling him of her change of heart.

The exposition is simple and direct, and a pictorial touch is added by the setting, a ranch-house at the foot of the Sierra Mountains, where the first chapter of the girl's love-story begins.

In the second act *Laura* is discovered leading a hand-to-mouth existence in a cheap theatrical boarding-house in New York. Without *Brockton's* influence she has been unable to secure an engagement, her clothes and jewelry have all gone to pawn, and a shrill-voiced landlady is clamorous for unpaid rent.

Two minor characters introduced into this scene—a typical negro "slavey" and a theatrical advance-agent, who has seen better days—provide comedy touches as safety-valves for pent-up feelings; and a third, a one-time show-girl, prospering in the easy way of living, brings the needed contrast. It is this show-girl, *Elfie St. Clair*, who acts as *Brockton's* emissary, and who, at the moment when conditions are peculiarly hard, induces *Laura* to receive the broker anxious to renew the old arrangement. *Laura* admits her inability to continue the life of poverty, agrees to return, and, at *Brockton's* instigation, writes a letter to *Jim Madison* telling him that she no longer loves him. In a moment of hysterical regret she burns the letter.

It is possible to gather some idea of the power of the act from this brief narration of its essential contents, but a longer description than is possible here would alone convey any adequate idea of the innumerable touches which serve to make its progress affecting and engrossing. Seldom has the exposition of character been more skilfully accomplished, and the successive passages linger in the memory like significant incidents of a real experience.

The following act is cruelly true in its revelation of conditions that have had, and are having, their counterpart in real life. *Brockton* learns that *Madison* has made a fortune in the mines and is on his way East, almost at the same moment that *Laura* receives a telegram from the young man announcing that he is coming to marry her and take her back to Colorado. There is a superb scene between the two in which the broker first learns that *Madison* is still in ignorance of the fact that *Laura* has come back to him. He insists upon a complete confession. *Laura* agrees to tell the truth, but at the suggestion of her friend *Elfie*, fails to make good the promise, and prepares to marry *Jim* at once. While the young man is away arranging the final details, *Brockton* returns and learns what has happened. His denunciation of the girl is met by a counter-charge that he has been the evil influence in her life. Unable to listen to her storm of abuse, he leaves the house, while *Laura*, busily engaged in throwing her belongings into a trunk, calls out wildly her right to marriage and to happiness.

Further than this in an expression of cumulative emotion it would seem almost impossible to go, but Mr. Walters' play piles climax upon climax, with the result that his last act is a continuous development of interest and surprise. *Laura* has still withheld the truth from *Jim*, and he believes that she owes her prosperity to professional progress. As the pair are about to leave the apartment a latch-key turns in the lock. *Brockton* enters and walks slowly to the bedroom, while the lovers stand transfixed. Then, as the broker returns, *Madison* suddenly whips out a revolver, but his hand is arrested in response to a shriek from *Laura*.

To the very last moment the outcome is in doubt, but both men ultimately depart, leaving *Laura* to her fate, and, as the strains of a hurdy-gurdy filter through the open window, she turns, and, with tears streaming down her face, calls to her maid: "Come and doll me up." Her last line, "I'm going

to Rector's to make a hit," presages the long, lingering, bitterly ending life of dissipation which, as she insists, is all that remains open to her now. It is, in short, an abandonment to a fate worse than death, a pitilessly logical ending to a play which is as remorseless in its issue as a Greek tragedy of blood, and infinitely more affecting than any tragedy of death I have ever seen.

And to this result several factors contribute. In the first place, Mr. Walters has written a most remarkable play; in the second, he has been fortunate in securing the services of Miss Frances Starr, whose performance of *Laura* is wonderfully fine, impressive, and sympathetic; and, in the third place, he has had the cooperation of David Belasco, whose proficiency in direction and keen intuitive sense of dramatic values have made every line count.

In the rôle of *Laura Murdock* Miss Starr takes her place as one of the foremost emotional actresses of the country. The part calls for a varying expressiveness, its emotional high notes are tremendous, and it demands, for complete effect, a sympathy and abandonment to many moods. Miss Starr is completely successful in it. The rôle gives her an exceptional histrionic opportunity, but she, on her part, is to be credited with contributing largely to the play's success by the brilliancy of her playing and the perfect adaptability of her personality to the part she acts. The cast in its entirety is admirable, Mr. Kilgour as the broker, Mr. Robins as the Westerner, and Miss Laura Nelson Hall as the show-girl, each presenting a complete impersonation. Mr. Sampson and Miss Dunn embroider smaller parts with resourceful artistry and add much to the excellence of the whole presentation.

In "The Third Degree," a better play than "The Lion and the Mouse," and one which promises to duplicate the popularity of Charles Klein's most successful works, this author again takes up the cudgels against what he conceives to be an abuse of power. In this particular instance he holds the dra-

matic club over the police, who, according to his exposition—very powerfully and interestingly handled—are sometimes led, through political and personal ambition, to force confessions from prisoners by undue influence, or hypnotic suggestion, during the examinations generally designated under the term "The Third Degree."

In the opening scene of the play, Mr. Klein introduces us to *Howard Jeffries, Jr.*, a young wastrel who, in opposition to his family's wishes, has married a girl socially his inferior. He had met her in a restaurant where she was acting as a waitress, and his marriage has estranged him from his father, who now refuses to have anything to do with him or his young wife. *Howard* calls to ask a loan of *Robert Underwood*, a friend, who is an amateur art-collector, just on the point of exposure for some shady transactions. His visit is interrupted by the arrival of *Mrs. Howard Jeffries, Sr.*, his stepmother, who, it appears, has once been wooed by *Underwood*. She comes now in response to a letter from *Underwood*, in which he has said that, unless she assists him, he will end his life. While the pair converse, young *Howard* sleeps behind a screen. *Mrs. Jeffries* tells *Underwood* that she does not believe that a man who could write so cowardly a letter to a woman would have the courage to kill himself. Then she goes away and the curtain falls. A shot rings through the darkened auditorium, and the next scene shows the third degree in operation. *Underwood* has been found dead by the police, and young *Jeffries'* presence in the room has aroused suspicion.

At the point at which we next see him, he is nearing the end of a seven-hour examination, haggard, worn, mentally and physically fagged, and practically a wreck. There are a few sentences of brutal questioning, or really suggestion, on the part of the police captain, who finally flashes before the boy's eyes the revolver found by the dead man's side. According to the playwright's postulate, an act of hypnotism is accomplished, and *How-*

ard repeats a confession, word for word, as the captain pronounces it.

Now *Anna Howard*, his wife, comes into the picture. She has been a working girl, strong, honest, and self-reliant, and, as her husband's father refuses to assist him, she visits a prominent attorney, and, after repeated refusals, gets him to undertake the defense.

The remainder of the play deals with her effort to free the boy from suspicion, a process duly accomplished by the discovery of the letter in which *Underwood* has announced his intention of committing suicide, but the result is not brought about until *Anna* has self-sacrificingly saved the elder *Mrs. Jeffries* from an ugly scandal.

There is a splendid scene in which the lawyer and the police captain are pitted against one another in debate, and the human interest is strong throughout. With "*The Easiest Way*," this play promises to be remembered among the few plays that have given distinction to the season, not only on its own account, but because it has served to bring into deserved prominence the finest emotional character actress our stage has produced in years. Miss Helen Ware, whose performance of *Anna Jeffries* in this play has brought her a contract for immediate stardom under the management of H. B. Harris, has what few enough emotional actresses have nowadays, an ability to identify herself with any part she happens to be playing rather than having the part identify itself with her. In other words, in addition to personality, she has art, and the combination is rare enough to be noted as exceptional. Mr. Wallace Eddinger is also conspicuous in "*The Third Degree*," and, though he is not seen often throughout the piece, his playing of the tense scene of cross-examination, and the several less exacting episodes, marks him as an unusually gifted player. Mr. Ralph Delmore, as the police captain, also scores, and Mr. Edmund Breese, who is a superficial actor, but a public favorite, wins popular approval.

"*The Dawn of a To-morrow*," in which Miss Eleanor Robson has re-

turned to New York, is a wholesome, optimistic little play, in which, according to the preliminary puffing, Christian Science, or some similar idea of the new thought, is supposed to enter. As a matter of fact, though Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett has apparently tried to show the beneficent influence of faith, it would appear to most people that coincidence and common sense play as large a part in the result.

Glad, the heroine of the tale, is an East End waif—the scene is London—in love with a youth who is supposed to be concerned in theft and murder, and whose innocence she is ultimately able to prove through the testimony of a degenerate young Englishman, who has tried to take advantage of her. Incidentally, she is the means of bringing new faith and happiness to the latter's father, a titled person, who has gone into the slums to kill himself, after having been assured by his physicians that he has but a short time to live. Miss Robson plays the heroine in her pretty, attractive, romantic way, and the entertainment provides a pleasant evening's enjoyment.

I am sorry I cannot say as much for Mr. John Luther Long's "*Kassa*," employed by Mrs. Carter as the medium of her return to the New York stage after a two years' absence; nor for "*The Vampire*," an alleged psychological drama, in which the idea is exploited of a man who steals from the brains of others the inspiration for his literary masterpieces. The latter play, written by two young men, the Messrs. Viereck and Woolf, had effective theatrical material in its extraordinary theme. But the workmanship was crude and unconvincing, and the acting did not help.

For his latest comedy, "*The New Lady Bantock*," Mr. Jerome K. Jerome, the popular humorist, has chosen about as whimsical a notion as could well be imagined, and the central figure of the play is acted with considerable piquancy by Miss Fanny Ward.

The play tells about a little music-hall singer, *Fanny Bennet* by name, who has married *Lord Bantock* while under

the impression that he is a struggling artist. When she arrives at his home, she finds not only that he is a titled gentleman, but also that each and every one of his twenty-three servants is a blood relative of her own. At the head of the "down-stairs" contingent stands her uncle, *Martin Bennet*, a very Pecksniff of a butler, who rules the entire establishment and whose word is law, even with the master of the household. Confronted with the necessity of either confessing the truth or putting up with the servants' insolence, *Fanny* chooses the latter course, but is ultimately obliged to order them all out of the house and tell her husband the reason. There is a momentary rift in the lute, but eventually the soothing note of true love is heard, and all is peace and harmony.

The play contains some entertaining scenes and an occasional passage of appealing sentiment. In addition to Miss Ward, the cast embraces Mr. Charles Cartwright, whose acting of the pompous, self-satisfied, and domineering butler is a highly competent and amusing performance.

To complete the record of the month's dramatic performances, it may be worth mentioning Mr. William Faversham's appearance in a romantic melodrama, "*The Barber of New Orleans*," an entertaining play in the old-

fashioned artificial style. Mr. Edward Child Carpenter is its author. It supplies Mr. Faversham with an heroic rôle in which he is enabled to wield a rapier, dance the minuet, and make himself otherwise agreeable to the heroine of Miss Julie Opp, while confounding villainy all along the line through the keenness of his wit, and ultimately through the sharpness of his razor, which, at one point in the proceedings, he holds at his victim's throat while forcing a confession of wickedness which he depends upon to reinstate him in the affectionate regard of his lady-love, conveniently hidden behind a screen.

The musical-comedy mill continues to grind, and it frequently grinds exceedingly small entertainment. Of the newest pieces in this class, "*Havana*," with a tuneful score by Leslie Stuart, the author of "*Florodora*," promises to achieve general popularity. James T. Powers is the principal comedian, and he is really funny. In "*Kitty Grey*," G. P. Huntley, an extremely amusing Englishman, is the cause of much merriment; and Jack Barrymore makes his initial musical-comedy appearance in "*A Stubborn Cinderella*," which is rather noisy. Elsie Janis, with her imitations, is the principal figure in "*The Fair Co-ed*," and, as heretofore, finds plenty of admirers.



FOR BOOK LOVERS



Archibald Lowery Sessions

The new departure in Ainslee's creates a novel classification in the magazine world. There is a certain charm in Zona Gale's "Friendship Village." A heroine with an extraordinary scent permeates "54-40 or Fight," by Emerson Hough. "Comrades," by Thomas Dixon, Jr., fantastic and rather amateurish. Not a single attractive character in David Graham Phillips' "The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig." "The Silver Cleek," by John Campbell Haywood, a story devoted to golf. A weird and wild tale is Horace Hazeltine's "The City of Encounters." "The Enchanted Hat," by Harold MacGrath, is extremely attractive. Myra Kelly's "Rosnah" distinctly disappointing



THE March number of AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE, with its expansion to 176 pages, its frontispiece by Howard Chandler Christy, and the opening chapters of Harold MacGrath's new novel, supplemented and reenforced by the traditional 160-page AINSLEE'S, has created a new classification in the magazine world, for there is nothing else with which it may be compared. The news-stands may be searched in vain to duplicate it.

But the simple process of addition is not the only factor in this seemingly sudden transformation, for behind it there has been a vital and organic development which made this expansion inevitable. AINSLEE'S has heretofore met a need which has "grown by what it fed on," a need which has brought to maturity the means of its own satisfaction in the unique magazine which has been given to the public.

This present April number happily and appropriately amalgamates with the new the mellow perfection of the old. In enlarging and embellishing the magazine, the publishers have not surrendered, and do not intend to surrender, the features and qualities which have

hitherto made AINSLEE'S so attractive to its readers. There are, for instance, in this number, stories by Joseph C. Lincoln and Mary H. Vorse, the best of the type with which these authors have become identified in these pages; there are a Western story by Steel Williams and a romance by Charles Neville Buck. The novelette is a society story by Elizabeth Duer, who has never been outdone in this style of fiction.

Mr. MacGrath's serial, of course, continues to be the most striking feature, and will so continue, for, like all of his work, the interest grows with each succeeding chapter. Dramatic interest is likewise characteristic of Miss Van Vorst's story "In Ambush," a story very different in style and substance from "The Goose-Girl."

Reference was made in this department last month to another serial story, secured to succeed Mr. MacGrath's, and in accordance with the pledge then given, it is now announced that George Barr McCutcheon is the author of the new story. Next month we shall have something further to say on this subject.



Zona Gale, in her author's note prefacing "Friendship Village," published by the Macmillan Company, says that

"the urgency is to recognize shrines." Hence this book designed to "teach our windows the quiet and the opportunity of the 'home town,' among the 'home people.'"

It is not a novel, it is not a story; it can hardly be called descriptive or even a collection of character sketches; hardly more, indeed, than the reminiscences, opinions, and gossip of Calliope Marsh, the guardian angel of Friendship Village.

There are other characters, of course, who have more or less to say, so that the book is not wholly Calliope's monologue, but they are all obviously and consciously subordinate to her.

This is not the first time that the attempt has been made to demonstrate the universal optimism of human nature manifested in the parochialism of village life. Consistent readers of fiction, who are denizens of urban resorts, are familiar with the conditions of a rustic environment.

Therefore nothing more original than the author's personal view-point is to be found in this book. It is Miss Gale's sympathy with her theme that gives "Friendship Village" the quality which, for want of a better word, may be called its charm.



"God wot, she was a woman. Curves and flame! Yes, she was a woman. White flesh and slumbering hair! Yes, she was a woman. Round flesh and the red-flecked, purple scent arising! Yes, she was a woman. Torture of joy to hold in a man's arms! Yes, she was a woman!"

This is Mr. Emerson Hough's rather startling estimate of the Baroness von Ritz, and it seems to be no more than is due her. A lady capable of emitting a red-flecked, purple scent is entitled to have her strange gift duly and enthusiastically recorded, and Mr. Hough is to be congratulated that he does not allow his diffidence to modify his report of the facts as he sees them.

But the activities of the Baroness von Ritz were not limited to perfumed and

tinted exhalations. The chronicle entitled "54-40 or Fight," now given to the world through the Bobbs-Merrill Company, shows that she had more to do with the annexation of Texas and the settlement of Oregon, the baffling of Mexico and the placating of England, than the State Department at Washington. Young Nicholas Trist, Calhoun's private secretary, tells all about it in this book, and his account seems to be reliable, for there is no evidence that, in his frequent encounters with the lady as Calhoun's agent, his wits were paralyzed by slumbering hair or confused by tortures of joy. According to her own more or less unwilling testimony, he faces these distractions with a firmness truly American, which finally forces from her allegiance to the cause of expansion, the story of her life, and her confession that she is consecrated to the principles of democracy.

This confession by her of her true destiny rouses in the breast of young Mr. Trist the shrewd suspicion, after her disappearance, that he knows something of the source of "that great uplift of Central Europe, that ferment of revolution, most noticeable in Germany in 1848." From which it would appear that the stolid Teuton's infirmity is his sense of smell.



Reverend Thomas Dixon, Jr., has recently published, through Doubleday, Page & Co., a book entitled "Comrades," which he describes as "a story of social adventure in California."

It is the author's obvious purpose in this tale, if not actually to sweep socialism out of human consciousness, at least to make it so ridiculous that no one will dare henceforth to acknowledge it as an economic theory.

Mr. Dixon has shown considerable restraint—unexpectedly—in writing a story of California containing no reference to the earthquake. But repression has not been so habitual with him as to keep this story entirely within rational bounds.

"Comrades" gives an account of an amateur socialist's unhappy experiences with professionals. Norman Worth, the son of a wealthy father, is one of the high-spirited, generous-youth type, a young American with ideals of the sort that are intolerable to the hard-headed, successful father who has his traditional veneration for institutions which he hardly comprehends, but to which he attributes the material blessings which he enjoys. Of course, the father is a colonel.

Norman seems to have been led toward socialism by his interest in a feminine socialist, who rejoices in the name of Barbara Bozenta. It seems hardly necessary to describe her further as "A New Joan of Arc," as Mr. Dixon does, though possibly it helps to add "color" to the tale.

Norman deserts his father and his fiancée, Elena Stockton, to undertake the settlement of a socialistic colony on an island in the Pacific, a few hundred miles from San Francisco. Then his troubles begin, and end only by the disintegration of the colony and his union with Barbara, while Elena consoles herself with the mature affection of "Colonel" Worth.

It is altogether a fantastic tale, and, if we may venture to say it, rather amateurish.



Unaffrighted and unmitigated materialism seems to be predominant in David Graham Phillips' conceptions of his art.

"The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig," of which D. Appleton & Co. are the publishers, is the latest demonstration of Mr. Phillips' ideals of life, with which the readers of his stories have become familiar. Skepticism as to the possibility of any sort of "realism," save that which has some form of sensual advantage, seems to be the aim and ambition of most of the characters in this tale. The unspeakably and blatantly vulgar Craig, untamed to the very end, can only have been intended to embody conceptions of the means necessarily to be employed to

bring American endeavor to a successful issue. What passes in fiction as Western crudity—it is really characteristic of immaturity everywhere—may be tolerated, but the incredible boorishness of Craig, a pose assumed to advance his interests, as, in fact, it does, is almost disgusting.

Margaret Severance is intended to typify the luxury-loving, calculating husband-hunter. According to the newspapers and theaters and novels, the type is a common one, but they seldom give us triter details so intimate and so circumstantial as those descriptive of Margaret's crowded moments between bed and breakfast. No wonder she wanted a husband with money.

Grant Arkwright's function in the story seems to be solely to mark the emphasis in the contrast between the degeneracy of the man of refinement and the vigor of the human bull in the china-shop. It is clear from this story that good taste and cultivation must give way before the onslaughts of "the man who does things," no matter what he does or how he does them.

If, as has been said, people like novels for the sake of the attractiveness of the characters, "The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig" will find few admirers, for there is not a single person in the whole book that one is not glad to see the last of.



Mr. E. Phillips Oppenheim's latest story, "The Missioner," published by Little, Brown & Co., gives an account of certain experiences which came to a representative of the familiar type of muscular Christianity, the enthusiastic young graduate burning with zeal for the uplift of humanity.

He begins his labors among the poor, always the most obvious field for such work, but in his search for novelties makes the mistake of attempting the reform of a more or less prosperous and contented rural community. His first step in this direction brings him into conflict with the woman who occupies the position of lord of the manor. She

resents his assumption that her tenants stand in need of uplifting, and dismisses him with haughty disdain.

He has made his impression upon her, however, not as an apostle of peace on earth good-will toward men, but as mere man, and he soon discovers her interest in him, and is willing to respond until she makes it evident that she has no serious purpose. Whereupon he becomes reckless, and lets himself go in the whirlpool of Parisian dissipation.

This mood spends its force, and is followed by a readjustment of his relations with the lady, in which they both reach the conclusion that life has for both of them something more serious and satisfying than uplifting or flirtation.



"The Silver Cleek" is a golf-story by John Campbell Haywood, published by Mitchell Kennerly. It is hardly more than a short story, for, though it is a volume of over two hundred pages, it has a rather meager allowance of type to the page.

It is devoted to the narrative of the mystery of the extraordinary golfing skill of Prince Ramo Oolah, an Indian dignitary who has been discovered by Paul Evens during his travels in the East and introduced by him to the members of his golf-club.

The prince has several encounters with the crack players of the club, all of whom he defeats with such ease that there seems to be something rather uncanny about it, and naturally there develops in the mind of the club members a suggestion of Oriental occultism.

The feminine element is supplied by the sister of the prince, a young lady who shows many symptoms of Western civilization and, of course, the story ends with a love episode.



"The City of Encounters," by Horace Hazeltine, published by Mitchell Kennerly, is a wild tale of the adventures of John Brooke, stranded, as he sup-

posed, in New York on his way from Honolulu to Boston. He imagined himself practically penniless in a hotel—probably on Broadway—after having had some harrowing experiences in a railroad wreck between Chicago and New York.

Collecting his wits sufficiently to prepare for bed, he discovered that he had, in the confusion of the wreck, carried off another man's bag, which upon examination was found to be packed with money to the amount of some one hundred and eighteen thousand dollars.

His experiences in carrying this bag full of bills around the streets of New York form the substance of the story, which, under the circumstances, could easily have been expanded to an indefinite number of volumes; and why it should have been limited to 384 printed pages is something that is not easy to understand, and seems to indicate a shocking disregard of opportunity by both author and publisher.

The furtive criminal—Shorty Hanks, in this story—the beautiful young heiress, the mysterious adventuress with a Harlem flat, the Waldorf sports, with balloons and steam-yachts, all more or less familiar characters in fiction—each one has a star part in "The City of Encounters," of course.

The solution of the mystery is deferred by devices which, as has been said, might have been multiplied indefinitely, and, so far as can be seen, they are brought to a climax only by the exigencies of Brooke's love-affair with the beautiful young heiress, fortunately for them as well as for the readers of this weird tale.



The Bobbs-Merrill Company publishes a volume of four stories by Harold MacGrath under the title of "The Enchanted Hat."

They are all in the same vein as that which characterizes Mr. MacGrath's successful books, "The Man on the Box," "Hearts and Masks," and "The Lure of the Mask." That is to say,

they all deal with the theme of unusual adventure and romance in the life of New York, mingled with the familiar and every-day facts, manners, and localities of that same life, a mixture which Mr. MacGrath handles so skillfully and so entertainingly.

"The Enchanted Hat," "The Wrong Coat," "A Night's Enchantment," and "No Cinderella" are all attractive titles, and no one who reads the stories is likely to be disappointed in the anticipations excited by these names. The style in which they are written is so easy and natural that the reader has neither time nor inclination to wonder as to probabilities.



Myra Kelly's novel "Rosnah," published by D. Appleton & Co., is not what the reading public has a right to expect from the author of "Little Citizens," and seems to be fairly good evidence that the faculty of recording one's own personal observations and experiences interestingly does not imply a talent for novel-writing.

The chief defect of "Rosnah" is painfully faulty construction; it is wanting in unity, and gives one the impression that it was hastily and carelessly thrown together. It lacks even such cohesiveness as is possessed in a degree by a series of short stories all dealing with the same characters.

Its principal concern is with the adventures of an Irish girl of good family in her impersonation of her brother's fiancée, and as the deception is practised upon the members of the latter's household, father, mother, and brothers, it gives the story an air of something like grotesque unreality.

The scene is laid in Ireland in the time of Parnell, and, of course, the tale has a great deal to do with boycotts and evictions and Parliamentary questions that are of comparatively little general interest to-day. The reality of such episodes as may be "founded on fact" is neutralized by the artificiality of the characterization and the forced dialogue. The book begins with an impossibility, in a fictional sense, and never recovers from the effects of its false start.

Except to those who find an interest in anything written by the author of "Little Citizens," it is not a book to be recommended.



Important New Books.

"Mad Barbara," Warwick Deeping, Harper & Bros.

"The Web of the Golden Spider," Frederick Orin Bartlett, Small, Maynard & Co.

"The Climbing Courvatels," Edward W. Townsend, Frederick A. Stokes Co.

"A Lincoln Conscript," Homer Greene, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

"The Ring and the Man," Cyrus Townsend Brady, Moffat, Yard & Co.

"The Romance of a Plain Man," Ellen Glasgow, Macmillan Co.

"The Story of Thyrsa," Alice Brown, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

"Rachel Lorian," Mrs. Henry Dudeney, Duffield & Co.

"David Bran," Morley Roberts, L. C. Page & Co.

"The White Sister," F. Marion Crawford, Macmillan Co.

"Special Messenger," Robert W. Chambers, D. Appleton & Co.

"Old Jim Case of Santa Hollow," Edward I. Rice, Doubleday, Page & Co.

"The King of Arcadia," Francis Lynde, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"This, My Son," René Bazin, Charles Scribner's Sons.

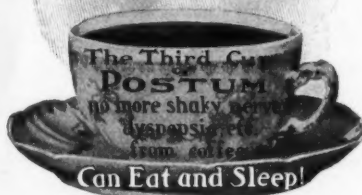
"Simeon Tetlow's Shadow," Jennette Lee, Century Co.

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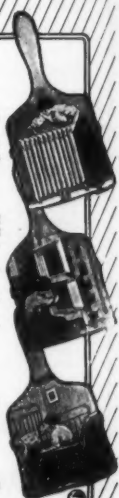
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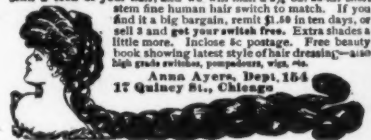
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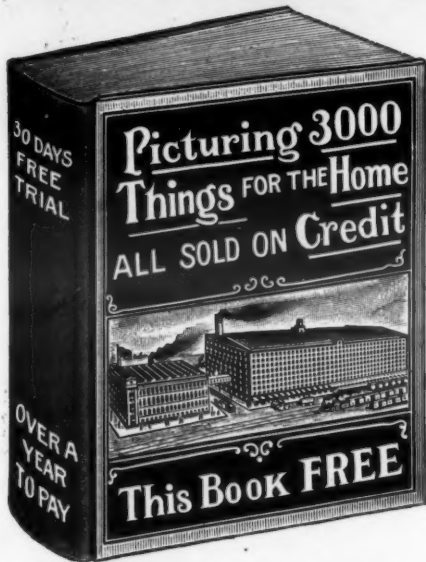
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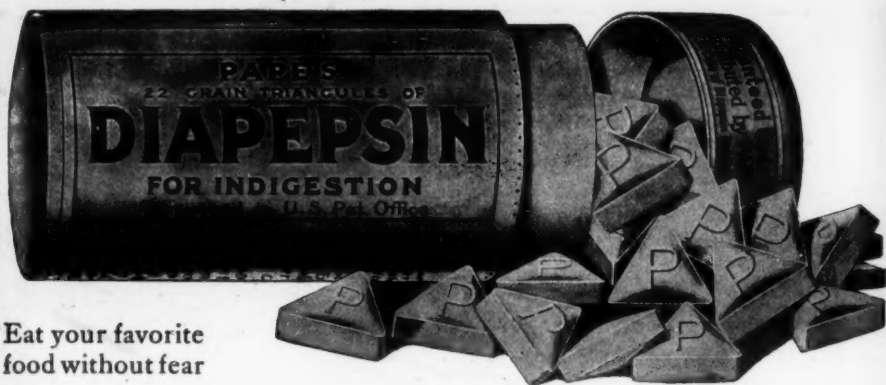
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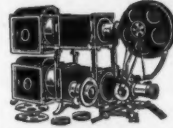
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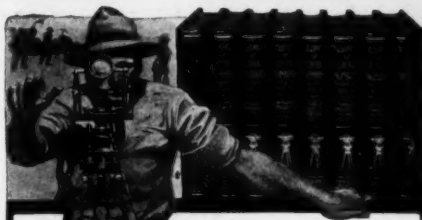
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